The Orff Echo

SUMMER 2023
VOLUME 55 NUMBER 4
QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ORFF-SCHULWERK ASSOCIATION

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on the cover

"Who We Teach" by students at Maranatha Christian Academy, Shawnee, KS.
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ethics statement

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association strongly encourages members to be positive and discreet when discussing our organization, specific courses and/or teachers, and the Orff Schulwerk approach. The very nature of the Orff Schulwerk philosophy embodies a broad spectrum of expressions, exploring different paths to arrive at artistic and educational goals. Members are encouraged to recognize and remain open to varied approaches and to celebrate both our differences and our similarities.

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Printed in the USA
Articles are viewpoints of the authors and do not imply endorsement by AOSA.

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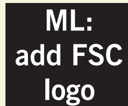

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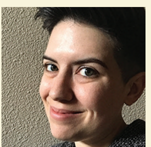

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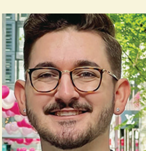

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mission statement

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association is a professional organization of educators dedicated to the creative music and movement approach developed by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman.

Our mission is:

- to demonstrate the value of Orff Schulwerk and promote its widespread use;
- to support the professional development of our members; and
- to inspire and advocate for the creative potential of all learners.

AOSA diversity statement

AOSA is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive membership, promoting an understanding of issues of diversity and inclusion, and providing teaching and learning resources and professional development that respects, affirms, and protects the dignity and worth of all.

our core values

As music and movement educators dedicated to the creative music and movement approach developed by Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman, we believe that:

- Every learner deserves the opportunity to actively create, improvise, sing, play, move, speak, and listen.
- Every learner should experience music and dance from cultures represented in both our diverse American society and the larger global community.
- Every learner deserves a passionate, committed music educator who values the importance of active music making.
- Every Orff Schulwerk educator deserves high-quality opportunities to improve their pedagogy and musicianship through active, collaborative professional development.
- Every Orff Schulwerk educator should cultivate the creative potential in all learners.
- Every AOSA member deserves opportunities to engage in open and constructive dialogue regarding the future and well-being of their chapter and the national organization.

By Michelle Fella Przybylowski

Communications that Connect: Past, Present, Future – Continuing the Journey

A Vision – For the Future

"A vision articulates a possibility, a long line of possibility radiating outward. It invites expression, development, and proliferation within its definitional framework."
—Benjamin Zander, The Art of Possibility.

The American Orff-Schulwerk Association's vision is reflected in the mission statement that encompasses countless possibilities—to demonstrate the value of Orff Schulwerk and promote its widespread use; to support the professional development of our membership; and to inspire and advocate for the creative potential of all learners. Inside the framework of AOSA's vision, goals, and objectives, the National Board of Trustees, executive director and staff, conference committee, and subcommittees are continually bringing a more culturally conscious lens to our work to assure that all learners have access to their creative potential. How does AOSA's vision ensure this is possible? Through honoring the organization's diversity statement, which includes protecting the dignity and worth of all:

> AOSA is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive membership, promoting an

understanding of issues of diversity and inclusion, and providing teaching and learning resources and professional development that respects, affirms, and protects the dignity and worth of all.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) are essential threads in the tapestry of AOSA. In 2019, these were carefully analyzed and discussed by the Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee. As a result of the challenge and importance of this work, a vice president of DEIA was appointed. In January 2021, the committee decided that the DEIA initiative would be better served by adding another position to help support and develop the organizational goals of DEIA. Thus, AOSA will have two vice-presidents of DEIA on the NBT. Also, all committees and subcommittees now have a DEIA-trained member, which promotes the continuity of these essential, organic expressions of our organization.

Continual awareness and knowledge are key to ensuring ongoing attention to diversity. The NBT is committed long-term to making this the norm. As my term on the Executive Committee comes to a close, I leave the organization with this focus on unity: With time, effort, and passion, we will accomplish these goals thoughtfully and effectively by working together and listening carefully to each other.

"In the face of challenge a change of perspective can bring new life into our practice and help us cope with any stressful emotions we encounter." —Michael Clements, **The Orff Echo,** ***Spring 2023***

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve as your president. During my term on the Executive Committee, the challenging effects of COVID-19 affected AOSA's work. The ability for the organization to survive during this difficult time was due to the support of many. How do we ensure a future that allows AOSA to thrive and continue to grow as a positive force in music education? By planning, analyzing our strengths and weaknesses, and by taking action. Our organization is committed to growing leaders who make wise decisions for future generations. With the support of the NBT and our membership, this work continues, as documented in the Top Three General Outcomes of the September, 2022 NBT Strategic Planning Session:

- AOSA needs to continue work to ensure support, opportunities, and access for BIPOC and other diverse populations.
- AOSA needs to work on making greater connections between local chapters, members, workshop attendees, and the national level.
- AOSA needs to communicate more effectively—what we do, why we do it, and how it can help individual members.

The NBT examined many ideas to advance the health of the organization; communication was the common thread that drove these conversations. The board carefully analyzed, identified, and began the work needed to navigate through the long-term effects of the pandemic and will communicate these ideals into the future as we continue to plan, analyze, and take action.

Changes for the Future

Through planning AOSA's future, we are positioned to create a robust organization. At the September 2022 Strategic Planning Session, the Restructuring Ad Hoc Committee—created to focus on the future of AOSA through a DEIA lens—made recommendations to the NBT. Those recommendations formed the referendum that membership viewed in early spring 2023, which gave members the opportunity to examine the recommendations the NBT had reviewed and approved for the organization. Why a referendum? We needed to make several changes to ensure AOSA's governing documents are accurate and in compliance with established current practice. To that end, the NBT hosted four virtual meetings to answer questions and listen to members' comments. As the voice of AOSA, our members have the final decision regarding the recommendations. Over 200 of you voted in favor of the proposed changes that will guide the NBT in serving AOSA members:

- The structure of the National Board of Trustees Executive Committee: president; president-elect; two vice presidents of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access; treasurer; and recording secretary.
- National Board of Trustees: Twelve trustees nominated per the Code of Regulations, Section IIa.

- All members vote for all National Board of Trustee positions.
- The industry representative will participate through the Industry Council and no longer serve as member of the National Board of Trustees.
- Staff positions renamed to: professional development director; communications director.

As we move forward, it is with great confidence I place the future of AOSA with Josh Southard as your new president. Josh, in collaboration with President-elect Patrick Ware, will lead the Executive Committee with Karen Petty, treasurer; Kathy Hummel, secretary; Manju Durairaj, vice-president of DEIA; and the members of the National Board of Trustees to continue the work yet to be completed.

Members of AOSA help drive the efforts of the NBT through creative and innovative ideas. Your support and ideas guide AOSA's president and the NBT in planning the agenda with meaning and purpose.

With Gratitude and Future Blessings

The Orff Echo is an outstanding resource. I would like to share my gratitude to Linda Hines, editor in chief, and the Summer issue coordinators Juliana Cantarelli Vita, Alan Spurgeon, and Martina Vasil. I value the dedication of this team along with the entire editorial board. On behalf of the NBT, thank you for the work you do.

My deepest appreciation goes to the AOSA staff, who work behind the scenes to sustain the success of the organization: Tiffany English, executive director; Anna Pack, associate director; Ruth Schwartz, bookkeeper; Debbie Peck, chapter assistant; Karen Benson, professional development director; Linda Hines, editor in chief, *The Orff Echo*; Marjie Van Gunten, communications director and editor, *Reverberations*; and Brian Burnett, national conference director. We respect and appreciate your work, and we value you!

Conference ¡VIVA! 2023

Highlight November 1–4, 2023 on your calendars. National conference chairs Sarah Fairfield and Jill DeVilbiss welcome you to attend the conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico and celebrate with AOSA's featured presenters, Chet-Yeng Loong and Kris Olson, along with many more amazing presenters. Check the website and app for details as they become available. Be part of making this the most well-attended conference in AOSA history. See you in Albuquerque!

What about Your Future?

Paraphrasing AOSA member Michael Clements, I ask you to consider: Just as seeds need water, sunlight, and nutrients to grow and flourish, we need to replenish ourselves and, on occasion, reignite our spark. What can you do to spark your interest? Take action—renew your membership! Explore the many resources available to members on the website. Take some time to search and read the governance documents. Get involved, attend your chapter workshops, serve on your chapter board, attend a Teacher Education course or a PLN, listen to an AOSA podcast, and make a commitment to serve by filling out the AOSA Volunteer Leadership Interest Form. Please remember to vote and, most importantly, to donate. The organization exists to serve its membership. We *care* about you! We *want* you! We *need* you!

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."—Eleanor Roosevelt

Dream, and dream BIG. Wishing you all my best as you journey into the future through a positive and hopeful lens of planning, analyzing, and taking action. Cheers to the future! ■

MICHELLE FELLA PRZYBYLOWSKI is senior professor at University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and a master's degree in music education from West Chester University. She is a National Board Certified teacher. Michelle has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and Master Classes. She is recently retired after 30 years of teaching kindergarten through Grade 4 music at Cheltenham School District, Cheltenham Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. She is an AOSA-certified teacher educator for Basic Levels I, II, III, and Movement Levels I and II. Michelle has served on the National Board of Trustees, *The Orff Echo* Editorial Board, and the Executive Committee as vice president and as president.

By Linda Hines With Juliana Cantarelli Vita, Alan Spurgeon, and Martina Vasil

Who We Teach

In a 1968 *Reminders,* Margaret Murray noted, "One of the principle aims of Orff Schulwerk is to provide every child with opportunities for really becoming acquainted with what music is about by handling the materials of the language of music for himself." The following excerpt is from "The Animal School" fable written in the 40s by George Reavis when he was assistant superintendent of the Cincinnati Public Schools. Some of you might have seen it in the May 1975 (Vol. 7, No. 3) issue of *The Orff Echo*. Its message reinforces Murray's words in a lighthearted manner—a metaphor reminding us of the aptitudes and dynamics of who we teach.

"The Animal School"

Once upon a time, the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of a "new world" so they organized a school. They had adopted an activity curriculum consisting of running, climbing, swimming, and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, all the animals took all the subjects.

The duck was excellent in swimming. In fact, better than his instructor. But he made only passing grades in flying and was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to stay after school and also drop swimming in order to practice running. This was kept up until his webbed feet were badly worn and he was only average in swimming. But average was acceptable in school so nobody worried about that, except the duck.

The rabbit started at the top of the class in running but had a nervous breakdown because of so much makeup work in swimming.

The squirrel was excellent in climbing until he developed frustration in the flying class where his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of the treetop down. He also developed a "Charlie horse" from overexertion and then got a C in climbing and D in running.

The eagle was a problem child and was disciplined severely. In the climbing class, he beat all the others to the top of the tree but insisted on using his own way to get there.

At the end of the year, an … eel that could swim exceedingly well and also run, climb, and fly a little had the highest average and was valedictorian. …"

What are the best practices educators can use to meet their students where they are and encourage them to apply their distinctive skills and artistry? In this issue, your colleagues share how the Orff Schulwerk approach can meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. **Patrick Hughes** challenges the assumption that children must use only a pure head voice, bel canto style, in singing. **Angela Thorne** shares how her elementary string students, when immersed in the Orff Schulwerk approach, felt greater joy, excitement, and inclusion. From an earlier issue, **Marilyn Gunn** provides a brief reflection on one of her former students. **Becky Burdett** discusses the benefits of using the Orff Schulwerk approach and elemental style not just with elementary students, but with older students as well. **Christine Ruggles** describes the experiences of her students with autism in self-contained music classroom settings. **Chris Abell** relays the positive experience he and his students enjoyed as they celebrated diversity by exploring the Mexican Corrido. In our final piece, **Cecilia Riddell** details the history and societal role of the play party from the years 1850 to 1950.

This issue's children's books, reviewed by **Martina Vasil**, **Melissa Ryan**, and **Erin Elliott**, offer students opportunities to imagine, to listen

to the sounds around them, and to embrace their artistry while enjoying poetry. In our Supporting Our Learning books, reviewed by **Jeaneau Julian** and **Jennifer Wassemiller**, readers will discover innovative recommendations for bringing musicals to life in the classroom and for stimulating positive learning experiences for students with autism.

The memories students form in school remain. Most of us can still remember how vulnerable we felt when taking a risk or how elated we felt when someone saw our potential, perhaps for the first time. The need for recognition, respect, acceptance, and inclusion is innate. Through generations, this does not change. This is who we are, and this is Who We Teach. ■

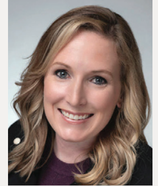
LINDA HINES is editor in chief of *The Orff Echo*. Coordinators **JULIANA CANTARELLI VITA**, **ALAN SPURGEON**, and **MARTINA VASIL** collaborated on this issue. They are active Orff practitioners and enthusiasts.

Thank You and Welcome!

Please join us in thanking **SANDY ADORNO, MARTHA O'HEHIR,** and **MARTINA VASIL** for their service and contributions as members of *The Orff Echo* Editorial Board. As their terms end, we would like to welcome our newest members:

AUSTIN COOPER teaches pre-kindergarten through Grade 5 general music in Montgomery County, Maryland. In the summer of 2023, he will receive a master's degree in music education and a graduate certificate in Orff Schulwerk studies from the University of Kentucky. Austin has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and is a member of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of AOSA. His article, "Free Play in the Music Classroom: Using Play as a Supplemental Approach to Tradition Instruction" can be found in *The Orff Echo* Winter 2023 issue.

CHRISTA JONES has taught general music at Concord West Side Elementary School in Elkhart, Indiana, for the past 10 years. She holds a master's degree in music education from VanderCook College of Music and has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and Masterclass. Christa presents at state and national music education conferences and workshops, and has served on the boards of the Indiana Music Educators Association and Indiana Orff Schulwerk Association. Christa's article, "'We Sang this Song Together': Linking Home Culture and Class Curriculum through Song Collection" can be found in *The Orff Echo* Fall 2022 issue.



ERIKA J. KNAPP, PHD, is assistant professor of music education at the University of North Texas where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in music education. Her scholarly and research interests include music for students with ability differences, teacher professional development, and issues of equity in music education. Her work has been published in *Music Education Research, The Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, Arts Education Policy Review, The International Journal of Music Education, Music Educators Journal,* and *The Orff Echo*. Additionally, Erika is an AOSA Level I and II Pedagogy teacher educator.

Singing and Culture: Rethinking Singing, Sound, and Beauty in the Elementary Classroom

ABSTRACT

A long-standing belief of many North American educators is that children must use only a pure head voice in singing—bel canto style—and that other forms of singing could endanger their voices. In this article, the author discusses studies across cultures showing that children around the world sing in different ways without injury.

PATRICK HUGHES holds bachelor's of education and music degrees from Western University, as well as a diploma in jazz performance from MacEwan University. He is currently working on his master's degree in elementary education and pedagogy at the University of Alberta. He is an elementary music teacher with the Edmonton Public School Board and has worked for the past 10 years as an educator and professional musician in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He is a member of AOSA, ACDA, the Alberta Kodály Association, and Carl Orff Canada.

By Patrick Hughes

In most schools in North America, colonial and Eurocentric beliefs have influenced how children are taught to sing as well as what to consider "beautiful singing." The prevailing pedagogy for teaching young children to sing is based on the bel canto style developed in Italy in the 12th century. Bel canto, with which children are taught to use a light sound and to emphasize head voice almost exclusively, has been the predominant vocal technique in classical and Western music traditions. This is not the only way for children to sing, however; current research shows they can and do sing in different, healthy ways in many other cultures. Insisting there is only one proper way discounts the diversity of voices and cultures present in many classrooms. As educators challenge entrenched practices and work to create space for students' diverse values and cultures, they must also reframe how they teach singing and consider better ways to increase appreciation of the beauty in all forms of music. The results of recent research suggest several tangible ways educators can help children explore more possibilities within their own voices.

Research on Children's Voices

Children's voices have three distinct registers (Rutkowski, 2015):

- A lower register, which for our youngest students is relatively limited, ranging from around A3–C4, that expands with age and can often be used from G3–C5 without strain for students age 9 and up;

- A middle range around the notes D4–A4, sometimes seen as the "initial range" for our students in kindergarten and first grade to begin singing;
- An upper register that extends upwards from the middle register and expands throughout childhood, eventually reaching an A5 or Bb5.

For younger students, these registers initially have smaller ranges. Between the ages of 9 and 10 years, however, if students learn to access all three registers, the average student has a full range of 26 semitones, approximately G3 up to A5 (Pieper et al., 2022). The same study shows that children sing most accurately in the range they typically use. With practice, they can learn to navigate all three ranges safely. Whereas some scholars advocated previously that head voice is the only safe range for children to use, "in observing vocalists in traditions where non-bel canto singing is predominant, we have found they do not typically suffer from vocal disorders, even when singing from childhood well into old age" (Goetze et al., 2012, p. 225). Goetze et al.'s statement reveals potential problems and limitations with the way many of us teach singing.

Children use only their upper register in bel canto singing. Thus, those who have easy access to their head voice are considered "singers" and those who cannot are labeled "non-singers." Researchers used such a metric in a study to evaluate the performances of children from five elementary schools around New Jersey (Levinowitz et al., 1998). They concluded that 75–90% of children were "non singers." A metric that labels most children as non-singers should cause music educators to pause and reconsider its value, yet it does not. The music we select, the pitch ranges we choose, and even the ways we measure and evaluate accurate and in-tune singing are often predicated on the Eurocentric idea that students should sing exclusively in this higher range. Although this form of singing has undoubtedly produced incredible, soul-stirring music that connects with many of us as elementary music specialists, the reality is that not all children come into our classrooms using, or even wanting to use, their head voice.

Children initially try to sing the way they hear music sung around them—in a way that seems culturally relevant to them. Some might even value the high bel canto sound. For many children, in responding to the cultural music of their communities—be it ethnic, pop, or Disney-inspired—pure head voice singing might not be something they naturally emulate.

A cultural disconnect can easily take place between the singing styles students experience in their home lives and in the music classroom. Many singing traditions use "voice qualities frowned on by Western teachers…. Rasp and nasality, qualities which are anathema to the European voice teacher, play an essential part in certain singing styles" (Goetze et al., 2012, p. 217). It is important to realize that "a culture's preferred vocal timbre is as important to its people as a bel canto sound is to most Western-trained classical musicians" (Goetze et al., 2012, p. 217). By allowing space for different vocal timbres, we will do a better job at validating our students. The supremacy of pure head voice singing in elementary classrooms has at times been used to impose the idea of "refined white voice versus harsh black voice," and there is a need to move to a more inclusive way of thinking about singing (Good-Perkins, 2022, p. 114). Students who perceive their culture as validated in the music classroom are more likely to be open to learning about other styles and cultures, whereas students who feel alienated tend to withdraw. If we want our music programs to continue to flourish, we need to move away from thinking there is only one way to sing and begin to embrace the idea that our students' voices are full of possibility.

Upon recognizing the problems with how I taught singing, I began to create lessons to help my students recontextualize what we consider "beautiful singing." The goal was not only to help them see beauty in the diversity of singing styles around the world, but also to validate their voices while helping them discover new ways to use them.

Our Voices Can Sound Different

To introduce the idea that not all voices are the same, I used the book *Music is for Everyone* by Jill Barber (2017), which explores different sounds, styles, and moods music can convey and features beautiful illustrations showing children from many cultures. It mentions numerous ways people might sing: "We can sing a lullaby as soft as a petal, or shout out loud like it's heavy metal" (pp. 7–8). Using this book as a starting point, my students and I discussed not only how every voice has its place, but also the idea that we can use our own voices in many ways. We might even explore how matching the "voice" we use to the song mode or style can be important. Would it make sense to shout out a lullaby? Or would it be appropriate to sing heavy metal with a soft, sweet voice? Just as we

learned in kindergarten and first grade that we have a singing voice, a talking voice, a whisper voice, and a calling voice, we can now start to think about our singing voice as being able to do many things.

We then did a listening comparison. We began with a recording of the Vienna Boys Choir (https://youtu.be/_QZcLb_hBU8), and I asked students to describe the sound of the performers. They were quick to note that the sound was "high" and "light" and that the performers seemed very still. We then listened to a concert preview of the African Children's Choir (https://youtu.be/_QZcLb_hBU8). Again, we discussed the sound and how different it was, and students noted how their sound was deeper and lower while affirming that both choirs sounded "beautiful."

Vocal Exploration through Imitation and Improvisation

In another lesson, I began with the book *My Voice Is a Trumpet* (Allen et al., 2022), which also affirms that all sorts of different voices abound. It beautifully presents a diversity of skin tones and cultures along with introducing the idea that our voices can also be used for social justice and to break down divisions in our world.

Just as we learned in kindergarten and first grade that we have a singing voice, a talking voice, a whisper voice, and a calling voice, we can now start to think about our singing voice as being able to do many things.

Students then listened to Louis Armstrong use his voice as a trumpet in the recording *Heebie Jeebies,* often cited as the first instance of scatting in jazz (Atkins, 1926). According to Armstrong, the scatting came about because he had "dropped the paper with the lyrics right in the middle of the tune … And [he] did not want to stop and spoil the record" (Edwards, 2002, p. 619). As the story goes, when it came time to sing, Armstrong simply continued his trumpet solo, but with his voice instead of the trumpet. We then spent some time trying to use our voices to emulate different instruments and even played a form of the game Charades in which students made instrument sounds with their voices while others tried to guess what instrument it was. After spending time in relatively informal vocal exploration, we began using targeted warmup exercises to delve into some of the mechanisms and skills that gave them more control and better understanding of how to adapt their voices to achieve different sounds.

Expanding Our Vocal Technique Tool Kit

Although imitation and exploration are important starting points, it is useful to work directly with students to facilitate their comfort in using their voices in different ways. The following activities are useful for helping students experiment with different vocal registers, larynx positions, and resonance.

Vocal Registers

Students need opportunities to try out and feel both head and chest voices. To find their head voice, activities like owl hoots or copying a slide whistle can work well. To find their chest voice, giving a deep sigh helps them begin to feel that range. For some students, because this range is the same as their speaking voice, it will feel easy to access, but others might struggle. Over time, as they become comfortable with this chest voice register, it can then be moved up and expanded, but only very gradually.

Larynx Positions

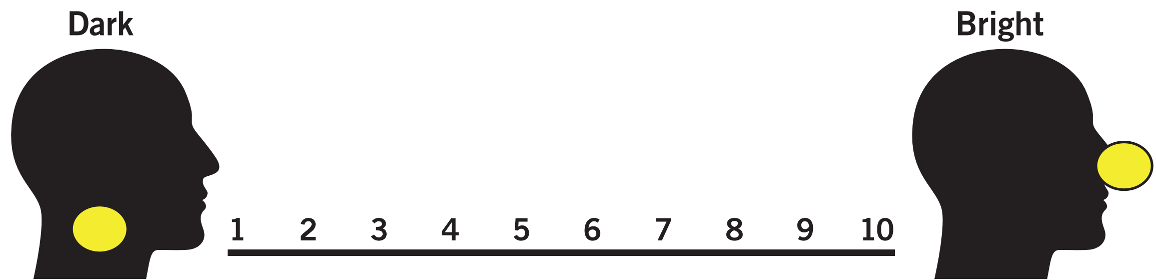
Depending on the style, it can be common for singers to use a low larynx position, a high position, or even to move between positions. Bel canto remains a mostly lowered larynx, whereas other styles, such as Native American and First Nations singing traditions, use a brighter, louder sound with a higher larynx position. For students to sing world music accurately, it is valuable to have them use both higher and lower positions—without tension.

To help students experience a lowered larynx, a simple starting point is to invite them to yawn. Moving towards singing tall "ah" vowels allows them to feel this position. To experience a higher larynx, invite them to say "uh-oh" as if something was just dropped on their foot (Sperry & Goetze, 2014), then experiment with that syllable, saying it with different pitches and different dynamic levels. In this higher laryngeal position, the sound will generally be brighter, but should also "take less air to sustain" (Sperry & Goetze, 2014, p. 63).

Resonance

Resonance includes using the throat, nose, and mouth in different ways. In traditional bel canto singing, the lowered larynx and raised soft palate can be used to create an open, resonating space. Some styles and cultures use distinctly different approaches.

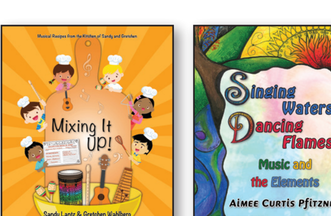
Figure 1. Sample Visual Used to Illustrate Vocal Resonance.

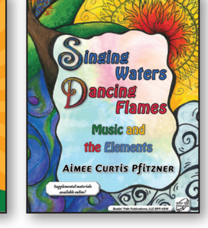


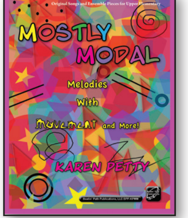
SOURCE: CREATED BY PATRICK HUGHES, JANUARY 2023.

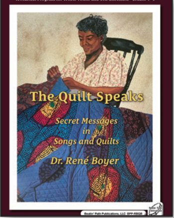
One way to explore resonance with students is with forward and backward placement of vowels. Initially the focus will be on what it feels like to use different resonances. With darker sounds, or backwards placement, students should aim to feel their voices vibrating in the back of their throats. Forward placement, conversely, produces much brighter sounds, and students' aim is to feel a sense of buzzing in the nose. Once they have experimented and felt those resonances in isolation, the goal then becomes learning to control and shift between those sounds. I post a number line of 1 to 10 for my students, with 1 being as far back in the throat as they can make the sound and 10 being as bright and nasal as possible. Then using a single sustained pitch, they explore moving between resonances by shifting gradually between dark and bright and using the number line to help them visualize (see Figure 1).

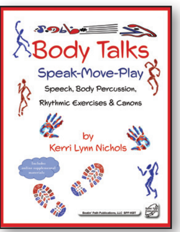
When this idea is new to students, quite a few struggle initially to shift resonance without shifting pitch. Once they find that control, their ability to explore different singing styles expands.

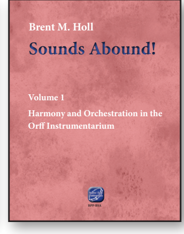












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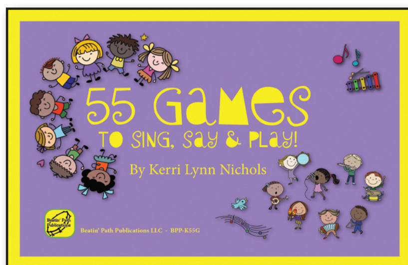

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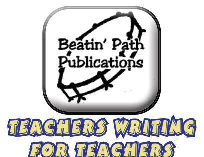

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Reflecting Diversity in the Classroom

With the understanding that children can sing in a wide variety of ways, and that choices in tone, resonance, and register can have cultural values attached to them, it is important we reflect diversity in our classrooms not simply by *what* we sing, but *how* we sing it. When students see their home musical lives reflected in the classroom, it sends a message that they are welcomed and valued. It opens doors for them to explore, honor, and acknowledge the beauty in a wider variety of musical traditions. Many opportunities are at our disposal to teach students about all their voices can do, while at the same time empowering them to see themselves as singers and not someone whose voice does not fit the ideal.

The activities noted here are a starting point. The logical extension of them is to begin applying these techniques to music that is meaningful and connected to the lives, families, and cultures of the students in our classrooms. My students were excited to discover their voices can do different things. They were quick to embrace the idea that singing in different ways can also be beautiful and artful, and they have become more willing to talk about these experiences. Several students have told me they feel like their voice has been "opened," and they are excited to discover what else it can do.

Perhaps most endearing was a comment from a third grader whose family was originally from Nigeria. I have taught her since kindergarten, and she was quick to develop a good head voice and sang beautifully in the bel canto style. Yet after listening to the African Children's Choir and doing some exercises that used chest voice, she was absolutely gleaming with pride and said to me, "Today I got to use my *real* voice." I was excited for her, but also heartbroken to realize that for several years she had felt her *real voice* was not appreciated in my classroom.

Conclusion

In acknowledging how some of the old methods of teaching singing excluded certain students and silenced others, it is important that we, as educators, spend time getting a better understanding of their music. I still have a great deal to learn but hope my experiences inspire others to consider options for creating space for the diversity of voices in the classroom. Honoring the students we teach, their families, and their cultures will ensure the message they receive in the classroom is one of welcome and encouragement to share their voices. ■

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FOCUS ON WHO WE TEACH

Elementary String Players Immersed in the Orff Schulwerk

ABSTRACT *While teaching violin and viola privately for two decades, the author witnessed the contrast between traditional methods and the Orff Schulwerk approach. In this article, she shares how this motivated her to pilot a strings program at her elementary school using Orff Schulwerk processes to increase joy, excitement, and a sense of belonging among diverse learners.*

ANGELA THORNE teaches music at Grace Miller Elementary School in Fauquier County, Virginia. She has master's degrees in music and in special education and has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I and II. Angela freelanced in orchestras and instructed young violinists and violists for two decades. She excels at using creative play and experimentation to help diverse learners succeed.

By Angela Thorne

Mastering a musical instrument requires meticulous practice. Violinists at a conservatory focusing on their performance are compelled by their teachers to aim for perfection. They will spend hours in small windowless rooms, a metronome beating out each second of time as they go over three measures, two notes of a shift, or one long tone with varied qualities of vibrato. Improvisation? Not an option! Nothing will be out of place and any deviation from the written music will be planned and painstakingly rehearsed. Nothing else will prepare them for the big, intimidating, ultra-competitive world of music performance.

Learning an orchestral stringed instrument from scratch is similarly frightening for some. Many of the activities rely heavily on the prefrontal cortex. This can be taxing on students and make it difficult to maintain enthusiasm. Further, young violinists and violists do not have frets on their instruments as a guide for finger placement. To develop good intonation, they must undergo a meticulous process that requires rote practice, attention to how they stand, precise angling of hands, placement of fingers, and particular attention to tone quality. In short, it is monotonous.

Orff Schulwerk can break this monotony and help students retain joy and excitement while learning a stringed instrument. Rooted in elemental music, the Orff Schulwerk approach is innate and engages the whole person. Elemental music is, "Never music alone, but music connected with movement, dance,

and speech—not to be listened to, meaningful only in active participation" (Orff, 1963, p. 72). Salmon (2012) seemed to understand this when she wrote, "stimulating the joy and the drive to play and to experiment and supporting development are elements of Orff Schulwerk we find in work with all age groups and all abilities" (p. 17). Integrating elemental music into instruction also helps students connect with themselves and each other and build a sense of community. When string students make elemental music together, this engagement makes playing the instrument more fun and exciting.

My experience playing the viola and violin in orchestras, string quartets, and solo recitals motivated me to start a program with an initial cohort of 14 students in 2019 that focused on these two instruments. After a year teaching general music at Grace Miller Elementary School in Fauquier County, Virginia, I realized that many of the older general music students wanted to learn another instrument as well. COVID-19 restrictions shut down the strings program in March 2020, but the program restarted in 2021. Now these students meet once a week before school in groups of two or three. The smaller numbers allow more personalized instruction and enable new string players to maintain the same learning pace as those who once met in a larger group twice a week.

Grace Miller is a Title I school with a diverse population: 44% White, 29% Hispanic/Latino, 15% Black or African American, 10% two or more races, 2% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander, .4% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and .2% American Indian or Alaska Native. I knew the Orff Schulwerk approach would be better than a more traditional strings approach because elemental music allows teachers to meet learners where they are, regardless of a student's skill level or perceived disadvantages.

Incorporating the Orff Schulwerk processes of imitation and improvisation, speech exercises, gestures and movement, and pentatonic play in a pilot string program, allowed me to reach the diverse learners in the school. A positive result was their increased sense of joy, excitement, and belonging.

Imitation and Improvisation

It is essential that music teachers be proficient and comfortable enough with the instruments they are instructing to set the tone and lead new players as they imitate and improvise (see Figure 1). Orff Schulwerk is about more than checking off boxes.

Figure 1. The Teacher Sets the Tone in the Music Classroom.

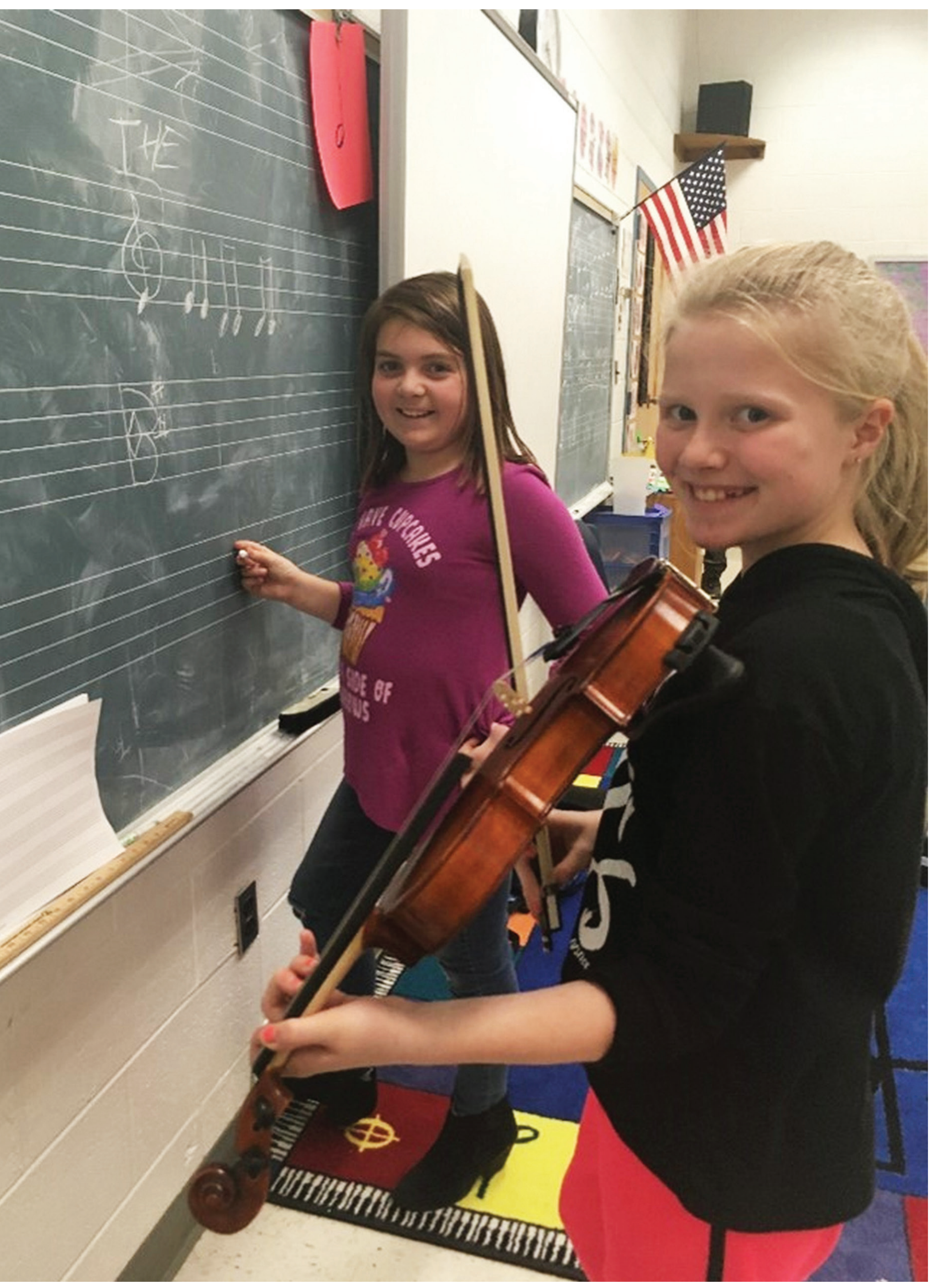
PHOTOGRAPHER: DONNA THORNE. USED WITH PERMISSION.

The classroom needs to be a flexible place where students can experiment at different skill levels while connecting with one another.

Of all the things Orff Schulwerk is known for, the process of learning through imitation, exploration, and creation, in any order, are the most noted. It is essential that new string players have a teacher who models for them regularly. Thus, we began with improvisation as the first step:

> Modeling is very important. One of the traps teachers fall into is they explain too much. They don't show enough. Kids need to see it. Kids need to see it in small chunks or steps, and then have the chance to try it themselves. (E. Stephenson, personal interview, August 21, 2019)

Figure 2. Students Learning Notes.



PHOTOGRAPHER: ANGELA THORNE. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Teacher-led imitation leads to improvisation, which fosters connection between students and teachers, students and each other, students and instruments, as well as students and themselves. For example, improvising on open strings with new learners is a good way for teachers to begin instruction. With a rondo form, it feels natural for the teacher to play an A section, and for each student to alternate with an improvised B, C, and D. This allows string players to focus on tone quality while building both creativity and social connections.

Improvisation builds a sense of belonging. Individuals feel elemental music within the body, and the connection with others is instinctual, not forced. In a thesis focusing on the social education found in Orff Schulwerk, Coberly (2021) stated that "Due to the wide variety of participatory options built into the Schulwerk, Orff students experience social growth no matter how they personally engage with their education" (p. 19).

Improvisation is a useful tool for reaching everyone in a diverse classroom environment where students have different background knowledge and musical capabilities. It also builds community. Stephenson said it well:

> … every child is different. Not only is every child different; the same child is different on Tuesday than they were on Monday. They're different at 2 o'clock then they were at 3 o'clock. And so, there's a certain level of adaptability to student needs, individualization of learning experience that you have to be flexible enough to provide. (E. Stephenson, personal interview, August 21, 2019)

Speech Exercises

The Orff Schulwerk approach provides a bridge between speech and note recognition in a way that keeps students' love of the musical experience alive. Learners strengthen essential skills while immersing themselves in the process. Natural speech is used to help students understand rhythm and pitch in a way that gives them autonomy.

In traditional approaches to teaching strings, students spend less time on rhythm during the opening stages of instruction than on learning pitches on the treble or alto clef. Method books such as *Essential Elements* label notes on the staff with letters. In Suzuki method books, notes are marked with finger numbers. Both books introduce new pitches at a relatively fast pace. On an orchestral stringed instrument, every new note a student learns is an opportunity to explore rhythm. Each note matters, because students are more likely to develop correct intonation and finger placement when pitches are introduced slowly.

In my program, new notes are introduced one or two at a time. Instead of using traditional method books with labeled pitches, notes are handwritten for students to practice and are not marked with letters or numbers. More advanced students are invited to write their own notes with a rhythm of their choosing, then say them as speech exercises (see Figure 2, p. 18). This is in accordance with rhythmic practice as noted in Volume I:

> The speech exercise comes at the beginning of all musical practice, both rhythmic and melodic. Single words grouped together according to sound or meaning, names, sayings, and proverbs should be, as these examples show, worked out and written down in their equivalent note values. (Orff & Keetman, 1976, p. 141)

My students are encouraged to count with their favorite foods for quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes. Instead of counting "one and two and three" they count "milkshake, milkshake, fries" or "apple, apple, pie." The students often laugh and joke as they practice using this method.

The Orff Schulwerk approach provides a bridge between speech and note recognition in a way that keeps students' love of the musical experience alive.

An Orff Schulwerk practitioner can get more use from the rhythm unit in the Suzuki books by having students make up their own words for notes in print. As Southard (2019) stated, "Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman gave us an excellent starting point in using speech for teaching rhythm and melody, providing us with numerous models for this approach" (p. 21). Young string players in the pilot program have been able to compose with building bricks and then notate these compositions. Each of these exercises has increased ownership and the likelihood that students will successfully connect natural speech to printed notation.

Speech is also used for developing melodic skills. The philosopher Rousseau (1762) noted that speech or voice can be divided into three categories across cultures: "the speaking or articulate voice, the

Figure 3. A Friendly Competition as Students Explore Melody.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANGELA THORNE. USED WITH PERMISSION.

singing or melodious voice, and the pathetic or expressive voice, which serves as the language of the passions, and gives life to song and speech" (p. 113). Speech exercises are extended to melody when singing is used to teach finger placement and good intonation.

Correct finger placement can be difficult for new string players. To guide novices, many instructors mark the fingerboard with tape. This is initially effective but can turn into a hindrance when players rely on their eyes instead of their ears to determine where their fingers belong. I forego this practice in favor of helping students match the pitch to the human voice.

Since the roots of Orff Schulwerk are grounded in elemental music, it is intrinsically flexible and could not be designed better to meet the needs of learners coming in with diverse backgrounds and ability levels.

For example, when learning the placement of the first finger, they are prompted to sing the opening notes of *Happy Birthday* to match the melody and to determine the accuracy of the interval between an open string and the first finger. Humor helps; for example, inviting students to play the first finger's pitch flat (i.e., a half step too low) and calling the song *Sad Birthday* usually makes them laugh. This method also strengthens musicianship through increased awareness of pitch while the humor keeps everyone engaged.

Gesture and Movement

Gesture and movement are also core components of the Schulwerk (Coberly, 2021). In the Grace Miller Elementary strings program, young musicians say words in unison that represent rhythms and then divide into pairs and devise a gesture or dance. The rhythm becomes its own performance art. Learners tasked with practicing this on one or two notes remain interested and involved.

Several groups of fifth graders enjoy performing dances together. These dances go with rhythm and songs they have either written themselves or are required to learn. In dancing, they solidify the rhythm in their own minds, making it easier to practice it on the violin. Two of my most gifted students put a pentatonic melody they composed to movement. They danced in unison and by themselves with individualized solo parts. This brought them together as friends and increased the warmth they felt toward each other, building a sense of belonging. Making up a dance brings the composition alive, but it also goes deeper. Coberly (2021) was correct in her assessment of the power of dance and the spoken word:

> This gives students the chance to bring non-musical issues from the outside world into the classroom and to process these situations in a safe environment among peers and mentors, empowering them as individuals and helping them build communities according to their own social needs. (p. 20)

In addition to building a community that cultivates safety and trust, gestures and movement are an effective approach for holding student interest through creative problem solving. Burroughs (2019) explained,

> In the Schulwerk, creativity is developed through many outlets such as movement, performance, and improvisation. Students are solving musical problems through these explorations. Through movement, they explore how they can move their bodies and then apply it to what they hear and feel from music. (p. 30)

Figure 4. Musicians Attempt New Challenges as They Laugh and Create Together.

PHOTOGRAPHER: CALVIN FELSTED. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Pentatonic Play

Just as the pentatonic scale lays the foundation for play in the Schulwerk, it also makes it possible for various string instruments to play together. Violinists read treble clef notation, and violists begin instruction on alto clef. Initially, this might seem complicated to students. New violinists often begin instruction in A major. Violists start in the key of D. Although this is not a problem when violins have an instructional class of their own, using the pentatonic scale is one way to teach the two instruments together.

String players in the pilot program wrote their first pentatonic compositions with D, E, F#, A, and B. Do and Sol fall on non-fingered notes. When string students compose using a pentatonic scale that employs F#, with added instructions given to end with Do, good intonation and correct finger placement are likely to improve, and the benefit only increases when students are working in pairs to keep each other accountable.

Two students in the pilot program who struggled with note reading showed great promise when allowed to compose on a xylophone. This took away the stress and tension of thinking about finger placement. It freed them up to explore, and they spent an entire unit competing over whose melody was better (see Figure 3, p. 20).

Even though this exercise is best used to reinforce pitches that young musicians have already learned to play, in the case of these two learners it gave them the motivation to keep going. Since the roots of Orff Schulwerk are grounded in elemental music, it is intrinsically flexible and could not be designed better to meet the needs of learners coming in with diverse backgrounds and ability levels.

Conclusion

Learning to play an orchestral stringed instrument is a complex process that requires repetition and painstaking attention to detail. Young musicians

might find this daunting unless creative elements are integrated into instruction. The Orff Schulwerk approach provides the framework to increase student joy and excitement while growing their musicianship and creativity. When instructors employ imitation and improvisation, speech exercises, movement and gestures, and pentatonic play, they cultivate a community that supports the learning needs of students with different background knowledge and musical abilities.

Young string players at Grace Miller Elementary increase ownership of their learning through the Orff Schulwerk process of imitate, explore, and create. Speech exercises assist new string players with finger placement and with improved intonation. Gestures and movements cultivate a community of safety and trust as students sharpen creative problem-solving skills by working together. The pentatonic scale serves as a foundation for play that makes it possible for learners of different backgrounds and capabilities to showcase their strengths and newly attained musical skills. This sense of community students feel inspires a fresh and fun learning environment (see Figure 4, p. 21). String players who feel they are part of something bigger also take time to support others. These musicians attempt new challenges together, laugh together, and create together. Teaching strings with the careful integration of Orff Schulwerk principles goes far beyond the development of rhythmic competence or musicianship. It provides a place of safety, enthusiasm, and joy for all learners. ■

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Johnny

Johnny was a tiny kindergartener with pale skin and hollow eyes. He had been removed from an unspeakable situation by Social Services and adopted by a remarkable couple.

The first time Johnny stepped into my room a few years ago, he surveyed the strange objects and then climbed up his para-educator's body, screaming. The following week he ventured in further but was soon in similar distress.

Eventually, he could walk all the way to a seat. But the moment we began to sing, he was overwhelmed. His former childhood isolation made the power of ensemble singing frightening.

As I brought out instruments, Johnny watched anxiously. At the first drumbeat, he was out of the room. Eventually, he returned. Each time the drums appeared, Johnny was visibly apprehensive, but he stayed longer and longer. Finally, at Christmas, he stayed the entire class period. By spring, Johnny had lost his pallor. As he gained the look of health, he lost the look of fear.

May came, and Johnny would enter my room saying, "Hi!" It was his only word. One day, the students stood to sing, and, Johnny, with a glorious expression of absolute joy, began to howl and coo. It was the sweetest sound I ever heard. After this, Johnny always "sang" with us. He even played the drum.

The following year, Johnny continued to make great progress, but his family moved at the end of his first-grade year. I never saw him again in elementary school.

Last year, at a concert, I noticed a young man listening with apparent delight. Afterwards, he stuck out his hand to me, saying, "Hi! I'm Johnny."

"Yes, I know," I replied, "I used to be your music teacher." He flung his arms around me, laughing.

In our profession, our fondest memories are not those of perfect pitches, rhythms, and timbres. They are of hearts transformed, like Johnny's.

Marilyn Gunn

(Reprinted from *The Orff Echo*, Vol. 46, No. 4, Summer 2014 issue.)

A Case for Orff Schulwerk in Grades 7 through 12

ABSTRACT

Orff Schulwerk is often thought to be an approach for only elementary music education. From her work with kindergarten through Grade 6, and, subsequently Grades 7 through 12, the author relates how the Orff Schulwerk approach and elemental style can be relevant to music pedagogy beyond the elementary grades.

BECKY BURDETT teaches elementary music at Lackawanna Trail School District, Factoryville, Pennsylvania. Her goal is for each student to be joyful in the act of making, expressing, and creating music. Becky completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and Masterclass and is active in her local Orff Chapter as well as in local and state music education associations.

By Becky Burdett

In the summers of 2016 and 2017, I was invited to be the Orff Schulwerk teacher at a theater camp for Grade 7 through 12 students. Camp director and musical theater pianist Joey Chancey experienced music education as an elementary student of Orff Schulwerk educator Jim Solomon. Knowing the broad scope of musicianship the Schulwerk offers, Chancey insisted an Orff teacher be part of the creative teaching team. Those who attended the two-week camp were not Orff Schulwerk students. Instead, they were members of their school music performance ensembles as well as private studio students.

When questioned what Orff Schulwerk was doing in the theater setting, let alone beyond the elementary level, my first response was that Orff Schulwerk practitioners teach "whole body" musicianship. I then began to reflect on my teaching situations, both school and studio, and how students of all ages might develop their musicianship with the Orff Schulwerk approach.

Many students in high school programs study their preferred instrument, or voice, with a private teacher. Having maintained a piano studio for 15 years, I observed the differences between classroom music and individual lessons. Most beginners in individual lessons, regardless of age, were given a set of books—technique, theory, and lesson. Although ideally all three of these would be woven into one, they are separated for a number of reasons. Beginning students do well with the individual books covering physical playing (technique), writing component (theory), and repertoire (lesson).

I have used several method books. Faber and Faber's (2011) *Piano Adventures* seemed to present a natural integration and progression of each. Students were quick to grasp a sense of the physical layout of the keyboard and were not limited to positions in set keys. Instead, Faber and Faber used landmarks on the keyboard and staff to allow for ease of mobility. Students instructed with these books were able to play about the keyboard with confidence (Faber & Faber, 2011). They had a strong understanding of what music is and how the piano is a vehicle for making it. Although performance pieces presented themselves, the joy of learning was carried over to each new piece. Suppose this sort of musicianship training to understand carried past the private lesson and into the middle and high school music ensembles?

High school music ensemble teachers will, at times, note the gap of musical skills not mastered in middle school. In many middle school programs across the United States, students are guided into choosing ensembles, and the non-performers are placed into general music studies. In general music, foundational skills are introduced, explored, and sharpened. For non-performers, worksheets, basic theory, and composer studies are common go-to lessons. All too often the ensemble is performance- and product-driven, and fundamental skills are not always given due diligence due to the pressures of polishing a performance.

Orff Schulwerk-inspired teachers might approach composition from the groundwork of improvisation, and in an additive manner. Rather than start with a robust score, elemental patterns are the fodder for exploration. The musician then makes choices about what else to change or add to the music. Instead of building towards a full manuscript, the opposite usually happens; teachers tend to reduce or pare down the parts to make the composed piece more achievable.

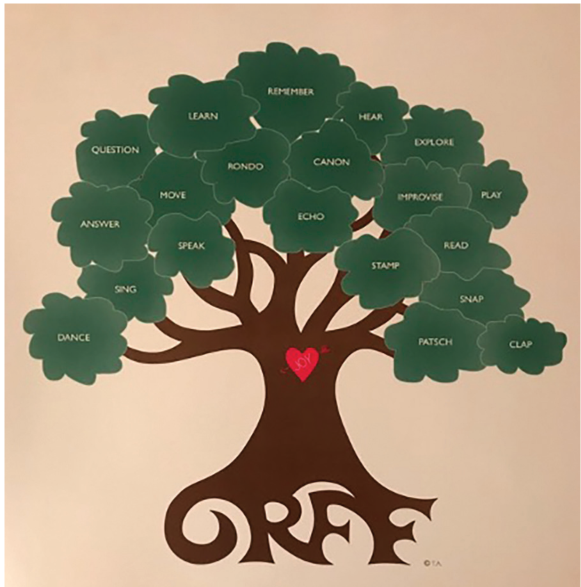
Perceptions of the Schulwerk

Like many others, I came to the Schulwerk with an assumption that it was for teaching children. My authentic training quickly revealed that elemental music making was not only accessible to all ages, but the very root of musical development. The Orff Schulwerk approach guides musicians to see the big picture—the scope—of the music-making process. It is not just about those wonderful instruments.

Orff Schulwerk came into being at a time when music making was a central part of many societies and home lives. People learned musicianship through the imitation and re-creation of the grand works of others, via notation and performance. Orff saw a need to peel back the layers of how music is made in order for beginners to become musicians, even from a young age.

In my observations, musicians brought up in the Orff Schulwerk approach are more likely to display several qualities. They tend to have a strong sense of rhythmic independence. They can identify elemental form and move expressively to music. They are exposed to modes as an umbrella of major and minor tonalities; therefore, they tend to have a broader appreciation for music of different cultures and genres. They should understand the functions and development of harmonic and rhythmic structures, which advances a strong sense of how their part fits with the ensemble. Overall, Orff Schulwerk students have a sense of pride and accomplishment for their contributions to the whole ensemble. This work, begun at the elementary level, should continue to the middle and high school levels.

Figure 1. Tossi Aaron's Schulwerk Tree Poster.



SOURCE: CREATED BY TOSSI AARON FOR AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHERS ASSOCIATION WORKSHOP (N.D.).

Vertical Alignment

Many Orff Schulwerk practitioners use analogies derived from nature in their teaching. A poster created by Tossi Aaron (see Figure 1) depicts a tree with joy as the heart and foundation of the work and music-making verbs as the branches. This organic representation can also serve as a concrete model of vertical alignment in the Schulwerk.

To the developing middle and high school musician, the teacher/director is the essential key holder to unlocking the mystery of how the parts fit together.

Just as a tree grows downward roots and upward shoots simultaneously, Orff Schulwerk teachers are constantly developing strong music roots while cultivating music growth. At the elementary level, music teachers strive to develop fundamentals such as beat competency, rhythm reading, expressive movement, and the child's singing voice. Elementary teachers are working with the elements of music that include form, melodic phrases, Keetman's rhythmic building bricks, and types of accompaniment.

Consider taking the word elemental beyond the confines of the elementary (primary grades) music context. Texas music education researchers Chandler and Mizener (2011) challenged music educators to work together across grade levels and established working partnerships for the benefit of students' learning. Rather than viewing learning at the primary level as a feeder program for performing ensembles, suppose ensemble directors observed and built upon it? Rather than only notation-driven teaching, these educators could work backwards and translate the music-making processes into the common nomenclature of notation.

Elemental Music Provides Openings for Exploration

Orff Schulwerk exposes the elements of music in a way that makes it obvious how they complement each other. Rhythm, melody, and harmony drive one another to create the whole texture of the music. I have observed that students who are educated in an Orff Schulwerk classroom develop their ability to listen carefully to how these elements play against and complement one another. Orff Schulwerk students should have a foundational working vocabulary of elemental rhythmic and melodic patterns and forms woven together into a fabric of repertoire. Directive speech used in the Orff instrumental process models musical vocabulary for young musicians. This directive speech makes concepts such as melodic intervals or harmonic shifts concrete for learners (Calantropio, 2015). Students trained in Orff Schulwerk are guided to make decisions about how parts should be arranged, played by whom, by which timbre, and at what tempo.

Rhythmic building bricks are the rhythmic vocabulary of the Schulwerk, as found in *Elementaria* (Keetman, 1974). Throughout the elementary years, students learn to manipulate these short patterns to create phrases. As students advance, the teacher should demonstrate how these can be expanded and/or contracted. Quarter eighth-eighth can be augmented to half quarter-quarter, or diminished to eighth sixteenth-sixteenth. Such rhythmic figures should be recognized easily in their many forms as students make connections of elemental patterns and notated repertoire.

In his Norton Lectures, Leonard Bernstein (1973) eloquently exposed the elegance of harmonic evolution. Orff Schulwerk theory emerged from the very roots of sound. Young students learn to play a drone (tonic and fifth) early in their development. Warner (1990) spoke of the multitude of ways to explore the drone long before functional harmony is introduced.

Drones become more complicated and lead to triadic ostinati. Along the way, melodic ostinati and countermelodies become apparent as more tones are available. Music becomes harmonically richer and more robust. Developments such as paraphony, decoration of the third, and triadic harmony appear and add more depth to the composer's toolbox. The more "know how" composers have, the more they "know how" to use it.

Rather than work from the closed form of an existing score, students can work in open forms of improvisation and composition. Allsup (2016) discussed the analogy of the classroom as a museum and laboratory. Although it is important to visit the existing material of notable composers' works, it is just as important for students to create their own compositions.

Suppose music theory and composition were taught from an additive approach, instead of analyzing composed works, for example, as per Schenkerian analysis? With an additive approach, students can improvise with each bit of new material as they encounter the theory and apply the concept appropriately. This might mean playing with rhythm, pitches, form, shifting harmony, or adding melodic tones. These are all forms of improvisation. A student who can improvise and create something "new" has synthesized the musical material. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, this is the highest level of understanding and learning. Once musicians know how music works, they can play with the music by way of experimentation and improvisation. After many creative experiences, mastery becomes possible.

Composition is to music learning as creative writing is to language arts. Young writers generate small

sentences with direct syntax and simple functions. As they learn more grammar skills, they apply their knowledge to create longer sentences. Emerging writers use more descriptive language and, therefore, create a more interesting piece to read. They do all of this with careful coaching by the instructor, who helps them play with and shape language as a form of self-expression (Hansen et al., 2014). Music teachers can do the same.

Through the Artful-Playful-Mindful (APM) framework, Jane Frazee encourages teachers to embrace the less-is-more attitude toward curriculum planning. Frazee, and later her colleagues, guided teachers toward lesson design that allows students to have a meaningful, artful (music) experience, opportunities to create new music material based on a specific concept, and then a chance to reflect on the learning that took place (Benson et al., 2015). Students—and the teacher—can examine the "why" of the lesson. As teachers, we need to be mindful and aware of what students will report they did in the day's lesson. Was the concept or objective clear and direct enough to have meaning for them?

Why are we doing this? In the business world, "people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it" (Sinek, 2009, p. 41). In classrooms, student buy-in is essential and critical for successful learning to take place. The APM project model is a logical fit for middle and high school students, especially for those who had Orff Schulwerk teachers prior to this level.

Moving Between Whole and Parts, Ensemble Over Ensemble

Consider comparing the choral versus instrumental ensemble parts. The choral score has all the parts in score order, highest to lowest, with rhythms vertically aligned. Harmonic structure is easily identified by those trained in theory. Singers do not have valves, keys, or other extra-physical structures to produce a specific pitch. Instead, they rely on keen ear training to produce the proper pitches relative to the others before, after, and simultaneously sounding. In group rehearsal and in private solo practice, choral singers can compare their parts against the others to understand more fully how their parts fit in the

composite score. Melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic figures become clear. The same is true for solo vocal music; singers' lines and accompaniments are in the same score.

Instrumentalists, however, receive just their part in their folder. An entire symphony can be reduced to three pages of notation for each player. Without the context of the ensemble, practicing their own parts can be deceiving. In addition to performers rehearsing with the ensemble, listening to a piece as a whole while looking at the full score is most beneficial. Careful listening and practicing lead to a cohesive performance. To the developing middle and high school musician, the teacher/director is the essential keyholder to unlocking the mystery of how the parts fit together. Effective teaching helps students determine which key will unlock which device, as well as when they need to create their own key if one is not available.

Orff Schulwerk teaching and learning is a constant pendulum swinging between the whole and its parts. Students in Orff Schulwerk ensembles learn all the parts, no matter what their assigned or preferred instrument might be. Why should this practice cease once a musician leaves the general music classroom? Music does not always need to be bound by the constraints of a treble or bass clef or instrumentation. Different voices can easily play or sing melodies and accompaniments and sing a simple melody in canon to create a rich texture. Giving each player the opportunity to experience more of the score allows them to see the whole of the music as opposed to knowing just their own parts.

Conclusion

The Orff Schulwerk approach has a place in the middle and high school music classrooms. Carefully crafted process teaching reveals the inner mechanisms of how music works. Students exposed to this approach understand complementary rhythms and (counter) melodies and how they create a composite piece of music. Orff Schulwerk students have a sense of flow and connection to the music as well as to other disciplines. These musicians are sensitive listeners and have an awareness of their part in the larger score. Orff did not believe in creating just beautiful music but in nurturing beautiful human beings. ■

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Join the Conversation …

"Be." Much of our conversation around teaching music and being music educators revolves around *doing*. But what if we take some space to think about simply *being*. What does it mean to BE? Being present? Being mindful? Being in the moment? Reacting to the actual *be*ings in front of us?

In *The Orff Echo* Summer 2024 issue, we invite you to "Be."

We wonder:

- What tools, resources, and/or approaches might we use to be present for our students, our communities, ourselves?
- How does "Be"-ing relate to Orff Schulwerk processes and the approach as a whole?
- How do current trends in education around trauma-informed pedagogies and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) relate to "Be"-ing?
- How might experiences surrounding mindfulness or meditation find their way into an Orff Schulwerk movement and music experience?

Have an article idea? The official call for submissions for the Summer 2024 "Be" issue will be posted November 15, 2023, but feel free to contact an *Echo* coordinator anytime. We need your voice!

AOSA
American Orff-Schulwerk Association

STRIVE-ing: Using Orff Schulwerk With Self-Contained Autism Students

ABSTRACT

The elementary music classroom has become a unique learning space as diverse student populations are acknowledged and celebrated. One of these populations is students with special needs, specifically students with autism. In this article, the author describes her experiences and explores ways to use the Orff Schulwerk approach to teach students in self-contained autism classes.

CHRISTINE RUGGLES taught elementary music for 15 years in Texas and Illinois. She completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and two levels of Kodály training. Christine has a masters of music degree in music education with Orff Schulwerk emphasis from Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. She is passionately interested in diversity within music education.

By Christine Ruggles

When preparing for a job interview with Rupley Elementary in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, I investigated the school with a Google search, checked for a Facebook page, and looked at accounts that mentioned the school or posted pictures of event nights. I also looked at their Illinois School Report Card and explored all the details from "Enrollment" to "Racial/Ethnic Diversity" and "IEPs" under the "students" tab. There I learned that 30% of the student population was in special education. In the staff directory on the school's website were labels beneath teachers' names that said "ELS (Educational Life Skills)" and "LBS (Learning Behavior Specialist)."

The special needs population in that school includes students with autism, developmental delays, and speech and other health impairments. Additionally, there are four classes of STRIVE students (Structured Teaching in a Visual Environment), with between five and seven students in each class and a teaching aide for every two to three students. These students, all diagnosed with autism, attend specials (art, music, physical education) in a separate room to prevent distractions and provide a sense of structure. Centers were deemed beneficial because the students spent most of their instructional time learning through center rotations. Some of them were verbal, several non-verbal, and others had additional health issues (i.e., cerebral palsy, issues with consuming thin liquids). Although Dr. Alice Hammel's summer course through VanderCook College of Music, *Teaching Music to Students*

with Special Needs, helped me, I felt totally unprepared and completely overwhelmed.

What I Learned

When it comes to teaching students with special needs, specifically students with autism, there is much to ascertain. This includes the extent of their individual diagnosis, who they are, and how best to teach them.

The Orff Schulwerk approach simultaneously addresses several music concepts. This is highly beneficial in the general music education classroom and with neurotypical students. Addressing multiple concepts at once can be overwhelming for some students with autism; teachers can foster greater success if they allow these students to focus on one musical concept at a time. For example, some of the Grade 3 to 5 students in my STRIVE 2 class were not able to perform a steady beat on an instrument or read the rhythms of different color combinations. They needed to isolate each concept and practice them over the course of several music classes. Gradually, I combined the concepts, then read the rhythms as they listened and played the steady beat for our song on an instrument. Bessinger (2005) addressed this in her Orff-based music therapy sessions for students with autism. She stated, "Each lesson in all my music therapy sessions included singing, playing, moving, and speaking, although it was necessary to separate the media to allow students to narrow their focus" (p. 10).

Focusing on one concept at a time not only prevents overstimulation, but also it allows greater processing time for students with autism (Garrett, 2020). In the STRIVE 2 class noted earlier, students heard the same hello song for five weeks at the beginning of each class. It was not until the sixth week that they were able, individually, to sing a portion of the song. When provided with wait time, most of them were able to sing it. One student began singing it during our third music activity. He sang the entire song while playing with a fidget. These behaviors reinforced the need for activities that isolated and focused on a single concept.

Strategies, Structure, and Communication

As Orff Schulwerk practitioners, let us consider using strategic language as we communicate with our students with autism. Sometimes short, one-step directions that use the student's name are the most effective. "Alex is sitting" and "Calm hands" are examples of strategic language teacher aides have used frequently to get wandering students to stay in, or return to, their assigned space. Hammel (2020) pointed out that too many words or multi-step directions could be perceived as "noise" and stress students with autism. Without concise language, some students are not able to process information and melt down as a result of misunderstanding.

Structuring the class is crucial to the musical success of students with autism. Bessinger (2005) noted her students with autism required "a concrete, highly structured setting with lots of repetition" (p. 10). Starting and ending each class with the same activity, a hello song to begin and a goodbye song to conclude, performed in the same way, provided my students with a sense of expectation and structure. We sang both songs in the same area of our classroom and in the same seating formation. For the first five weeks of school, I sang and performed these songs myself or with the teacher aides. During the sixth week of school, my students began performing the body percussion independently, suggesting other ways to say "goodbye," and doing some singing.

> To bring predictability to my self-contained autism classes, I used a schedule that allowed me to incorporate the flexibility of the Orff Schulwerk approach while providing my students with a sense of structure.

A critical concept I learned is that behavior is a form of communication. Hammel (2020) stated, "Behavior is the expression of a need" (p. 91). I would add that behavior communicates not only a need, but also fear, anxiety, or frustration. Daniel, a kindergarten student in one of the self-contained autism classes, was triggered by *Super Simple Song* YouTube videos. He showed his distress non-verbally by folding down his ears, pinching them, closing his eyes, and scrunching up his nose. Typically, he returned to his plastic cube chair and continued this response until the song ended. Daniel's behavior was neither malicious nor disrespectful, and he was not trying to be disruptive or manipulative during his meltdown—he was simply communicating his anxiety during the song.

How to Apply the Orff Schulwerk Approach

One of the most attractive features of the Orff Schulwerk approach is its flexibility, although this

very quality can be a point of stress for students with autism. Some students are adverse to this and instead crave more routine and structure. According to Gadberry (2009), students with autism "seek consistent, predictable events in their lives" (p. 47), unlike what happens in the Schulwerk classroom. To bring predictability to my self-contained autism classes, I used a schedule that allowed me to incorporate the flexibility of the Orff Schulwerk approach while providing my students with a sense of structure. During these classes, we followed a hello song, new music, old music/story, goodbye song structure. Having a schedule not only provided my students with a sense of routine and structure, but also it held me accountable in my teaching.

Bessinger (2005) stated, "It is important to approach rhythms, melodies, and songs in broader terms, using them as a starting point to motivate free vocal play" (p. 10). With that in mind, the recommended process would be to isolate teaching concepts and focus on one thing at a time and then increase repetition and allow more time to teach concepts. When considering the diagnosis of autism, this means focusing on students listening to our hello song and performing just body percussion. This also means using one hello song for a considerably longer period—typically for six weeks with my students. For weeks, my teacher aides physically moved students' legs up and down (stomping) and used a hand-over-hand approach to get them patting their thighs and clapping their hands. Around the fifth and sixth week they started performing the body percussion independently. As we incorporated more of the Orff Schulwerk processes into our lessons, the next step was for students to begin improvising body percussion. With consistent guidance, the plan was to have them choose a different kind of body percussion from a short list to replace one of the gestures. Although this might not be fully improvisatory, it gave students a choice and opportunity to improvise within a structured, already well-known activity.

This was not the only time my students had to improvise. They had previously done so through a locomotor and non-locomotor movement activity inspired by a lesson Martina Vasil presented at a workshop I attended. We looked at individual movement pictures and demonstrated what we thought each would look like in action. This was done with a lot of encouragement and hand-over-hand work from the teacher aides and me. We did this for every picture, with and without music. Then we performed each movement to *La Bamba* by Ritchie Valens in short segments over a period of two music classes. The following week, each student chose a movement from a revised, shorter list of options. We ordered the movement and practiced with the same piece of music. The third week, we used the same movement options and choreographed movement using a predetermined elemental form. The teacher aides selected a non-locomotor movement and placed that as the first and third movement. Collectively, the students chose a locomotor movement as the B section and then we performed it. Though these activities might seem limiting in terms of choice and improvisation, my students with autism required this careful structure. With time and extensive repetition, my goal was that they would become more exploratory and improvisatory.

For weeks, my teacher aides physically moved students' legs up and down (stomping) and used a hand-over-hand approach to get them patting their thighs and clapping their hands.

Orff Schulwerk educators might consider taking a multisensory approach while teaching students with autism. For example, after our hello song, each student enthusiastically sang hello into a microphone with changing sound effects. They loved the microphone and sometimes grabbed it and began singing other songs. One day a student, Ivan, intrigued by Mrs. Potato Head, wandered over to my shelf and gently picked her up. We spent the class period working on solo singing as we reconstructed the toy. Although Ivan needed his iPad to communicate, all his classmates sang "I do!" as we rebuilt Mrs. Potato Head.

In addition to toys and manipulatives, using children's books was a successful strategy for teaching music to these students. Several were entranced by the pictures and stories. For example, with a non-functional microphone, students vocalized the sounds for each animal in the book *How Can You Dance?* by Rick Walton (2001), illustrated by Ana Lopez-Escriva. The following week, we vocalized and depicted each animal through movement. Students were transfixed by the pictures and languages used in *Say Hello!* (Isadora, 2017), and non-verbal students sang *"Hola!"* and *"Konnichiwa"* into the microphone as we read. Students were engaged and kept a relatively steady

beat on drums during the refrain of *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* (Rosen, 1997). As Bessinger (2005) noted, books provide structure and concrete depictions of the music being presented.

Conclusion

Our students with special needs deserve a quality music education. While researching for this article, a quote by Gadberry (2009) stayed with me:

> These issues can make children with autism appear locked in their own world—a world without human interaction. It is the parents, teachers, and therapists who must attempt to find a way into the child's world, to make a connection, and to establish a means for interaction. (p. 47)

This reminded me of many of my students with autism who did not engage with others, be it fellow classmates, teacher aides, or me. In this quote, I saw my nephew, who frequently plays by himself, occasionally interacts with his grandfather, and rarely engages with me. The same author mentioned a quote from Gertrude Orff (as cited in Gadberry, 2009):

> A lock is the given condition; we bring the key to it and unlock it but we keep the key with us. Only rarely do we find a lock and its key together. Furthermore, there are plenty of keys but only one for a particular lock, the one that was made for it. (p. 47)

To me this means that we, as Orff Schulwerk educators, must find what engages and interests our students with autism while also considering what teaching approaches enrich their learning. Additionally, what works for one class of students might not work for another. My class of older students loved to play instruments, whereas the younger students were distracted by them. Students in one of my self-contained autism classes loved rotating centers, with one center as "Dance Party." The other classes were less successful and were distracted by items in the classroom.

As Orff Schulwerk educators, some of these strategies might work well with your students with autism. You might also wish to modify them to increase their effectiveness when applied to your situation. What is most important is finding what works best in your music classroom to ensure your students with autism receive the highest quality music education possible. ■

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The Mexican Corrido and the Orff Schulwerk Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month has become standard in many public schools across the United States. Research shows that students who see themselves reflected in their learning are more involved in the learning process. In this article, the author details the experience of using the Mexican corrido—its pentatonic melodies, elemental form, and organic nature—with the Orff Schulwerk approach in his classroom.

By Chris Abell

With the increase over the last couple decades in American student diversity, many school districts have begun to recognize certain cultures through monthly celebrations. One that has become especially prominent is National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15–October 15). Although this might have occurred prior to the last decade in some areas of the United States, the Midwest and South have only recently begun celebrating. This has raised a question among many music educators: "How can we authentically celebrate and present the music of cultures to which we do not belong?"

This is a challenge I have faced. I am a White male of European heritage who attended schools where populations reflected my home culture. I now teach at an elementary school that has historically served a large population of Hispanic students. In my years of teaching, I have witnessed the excitement of my Hispanic students when I shared examples of music from their home countries during Hispanic Heritage Month. My desire to share in an authentic manner inspired me to meet with my administration in April 2022 to discuss the music program performances for the coming year. Noting the population of our school, we determined a Hispanic Heritage celebration would be included among these performances. We selected

third grade with which to debut the performance in the 2022–2023 school year. The summer after this meeting, a world music course through the University of Kentucky taught me how to introduce multicultural content through transcription practice, research, and lesson planning, which helped me develop a plan for the performance. My studies covered the Mexican *corrido,* a type of folk song that tells classical tales or past news or current events. It was fascinating to learn about its historical significance to Mexico and how musicians used it to spread folk tales and opinions throughout rural communities. The corrido was the perfect subject matter for my third graders' performance.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy

The benefits of utilizing content connected to Hispanic Heritage Month go beyond the celebration itself. When teachers strive to bring their students' cultures into the classroom, they are likely engaging in *culturally relevant pedagogy.* This term was conceived by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1995 when she noted the level of academic success of low socioeconomic and racially minoritized students needed to be addressed by teachers, not students. Ladson-Billings (1995) further stated that if a student's cultural and racial heritage was represented in the teacher's instruction, the student's academic performance would improve. Over the years, culturally relevant pedagogy has expanded to include *culturally responsive pedagogy*, an approach that emphasizes "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Rather than simply providing content with which students might connect, teachers need to be ever responding to cultural cues and inferences in their classrooms. Culturally relevant pedagogy might provide higher academic results; by including culturally responsive pedagogy, however, it provides global understanding and thought, or cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Ladson-Billings wrote about culturally relevant pedagogy over the broad spectrum of education. As with many educational approaches, however, it takes some adjustment to adapt it for the music classroom. Abril (2013) has written extensively on the inclusion of multicultural content and educators' responsibility to present this content respectfully and authentically. He stated how important it was that students were seen and heard. Without this connection between student and teacher, no cultural connection can be made to the content, because students do not feel they are comfortable enough to be themselves in a classroom (Cantarelli Vita, 2020). In my situation, I understood that without trust between my Mexican students and me, a true connection by them to my presentation of the corrido would be nonexistent. Years of careful planning, discussing, and cultivating trusting relationships formed these connections.

Corrido

Presenting the corrido as close to its origins as possible required research into the written resources of culture bearers and cultural experts. I discovered that the corrido was predominately known as a Mexican folk artform; debate as to where it originated is ongoing. Some suggested it is a direct descendant of the Spanish romance, because both tell a story as a ballad (a poem or song narrating a story in short stanzas). Like the Spanish romance, many corridos are in triple meter and often have melodic material in AABA form (Alviso, 2011). Others argued that the corrido originated from the Rio Grande borderlands of Mexico and only coincidentally resembles the Spanish romance (Hernández, 2005).

> Students pantomimed the story told in the corrido (drama), practiced fluency in speaking, and demonstrated syllabic competencies by rewriting the text of the corrido to summarize the folk tale, keeping in time the syllabic rhythm (literacy).

Regardless of its origins, the corrido that exists in Mexico is unmistakable in its identity, function, and significance. The corrido rose in popularity during the Mexican Revolution in the early 20th century when Pancho Villa and other revolutionary leaders aspired to overthrow the longtime dictator Porfirio Díaz (McLynn, 2000). Corridos tell a story. They were written around campfires to portray opinions on the events of the war, whether in support of Pancho Villa's revolutionaries or demonizing them in support of the federal government. It was the corrido that prevented the atrocities of the government from going unbeknownst to rural townsfolk. Though these were the establishing historical events for the corrido, the war was not its only subject. Corridos also told stories of love, great vigilante heroes, dangerous outlaws on the run, and more (Werner, 1994).

Whatever the subject matter might be, certain elements are characteristic of a corrido. A corrido can be recognized right away by the *la llamada,* or greeting. In this greeting, the narrator assumes the role of the character telling the story, defines the location, and establishes the time. According to Paredes and Herrera-Sobek (2012), the greeting usually beckoned the listener with text resembling, "Come and listen to my story" (see Figure 1). The corrido's body, with an unlimited number of verses that echo the greeting's melody and syllabic structure, follows. This is where the story is told. Often in Mexican culture, participants in the corrido include verses taught to them or that they created on the spot. The corrido closes with *la despedida,* or farewell. The despedida is slightly more consistent in its text than la llamada. Typically, it begins with*, "Yo con ésta mi despido"* or "This is my farewell." The second line is open to variations. The third line is often *"Aquí se acaba el corrido"* or "This is the end of the ballad." The fourth line states the theme and, often, the title (Paredes & Herrera-Sobek, 2012). The text of the corrido is usually in lines of eight syllables and in an ABCB rhyme scheme (Alviso, 2011; Hernández, 2005; Werner, 1994). Musically, the corrido is most often found in triple meter with a bass line on the strong beats and a strummed chord on each weak beat (Alviso, 2011).

Corrido in the Schulwerk

To bring the corrido into my Orff Schulwerk classroom, I first determined my learning objectives, and then consulted various resources to prepare the lessons. My plan involved developing the corrido into a musical performance with my third-grade students, and for them to design costumes, accompany the corrido instrumentally, sing it, and rewrite the text to match the folk tale we were using.

I went to the AOSA website and consulted the book, *Discovering Orff* (Frazee & Kreuter, 1987)*,* to prepare my lessons through the lens of Orff Schulwerk. In reading this book, it occurred to me that the musical elements of the corrido—triple meter, elemental form, and pentatonic melodies—are all central elements of the Schulwerk and they would work seamlessly with it. Further, because the Schulwerk approach centers on student creativity (Frazee & Kreuter, 1987), placing creative control in the students' hands would work well. Musically, by third grade students should be able to perform songs in Do pentatonic and triple meter and with some texture, three to four instrumental parts (Frazee & Kreuter, 1987). Familiarizing students with the musical elements presented in our corrido could be accomplished through creative movement activities common in the Orff Schulwerk classroom.

Figure 1. La Llemada of Benjamín Argumedo.

Para empezar a cantar, para empezar a cantar pido permiso primero, señores, son las mañanas, señores, son las mañanas, de Benjamín Argumedo.	In order to begin to sing, in order to begin to sing, I ask your permission first, gentlemen this is the ballad, gentlemen this is the ballad of Benjamín Argumedo.

SOURCE: PAREDES & HERRERA-SOLBECK, 2012.

Corrido in the Classroom

We broke the corrido unit into four parts: (1) introducing it, (2) reading the folk tale for the performance, (3) rewriting the text to tell the folk tale, and (4) creating the musical. Each of these parts took several class periods to complete in order to ensure students developed enough familiarity and mastery of each component to perform their corrido with little to no help from me.

First, to introduce the corrido to the students, I gave a basic definition and context of when it rose in popularity. We discussed the Mexican Revolution and how it occurred before the Internet, so news had to be spread through corridos instead of through newspapers, which were government controlled. We listened to several different examples of corridos, including *La Cucaracha.* Students learned how many folk tales and legends of outlaws were told through corridos as well. I played the Smithsonian Folkways recording of *Corrido de Cananea* (Guty y Chalin, 1956) for the class with Spanish and English text on the board. Students were then separated into groups and tasked with working together to dramatize the story. This helped familiarize them with the melody and gave them a chance to practice pantomiming the text of a song. In the second lesson, I read "The Little Horse of Many Colors," to my students. This folk tale from Latin America is about Pedro, a farmer in New Mexico, who acquired a wish-granting horse. Students then worked in groups to summarize the main events of the story. In the third lesson, they took the melody from the corrido we learned in the first lesson and rewrote the text to tell Pedro's story. By this point, they were all familiar with the musical elements of the corrido and the folk tale. The only thing left was to piece together the performance.

Figure 2. Estes Third-Grade Students Performing Their Corrido.

PHOTOGRAPHER: KATY HARRISON. USED WITH PERMISSION.

The final lesson took several class periods. Each class was assigned one part of the story to prepare. We worked together to synthesize the students' favorite lines of each group's corrido to make one for the class. From there, they volunteered to either act, sing, or play instruments in the final performance. Actors and singers worked together to decide how they could dramatize the text, and those on instruments learned how to play the bassline on mallet instruments. We brainstormed together the costumes for the different characters, and I brought those costumes to life. For the performance, students who were singing and playing instruments dressed as travelers gathered around a fire (see Figure 2) as the actors brought their melodic stories to life in front of the audience beside them. The students were successful in displaying the spirit of the corrido in an authentic way.

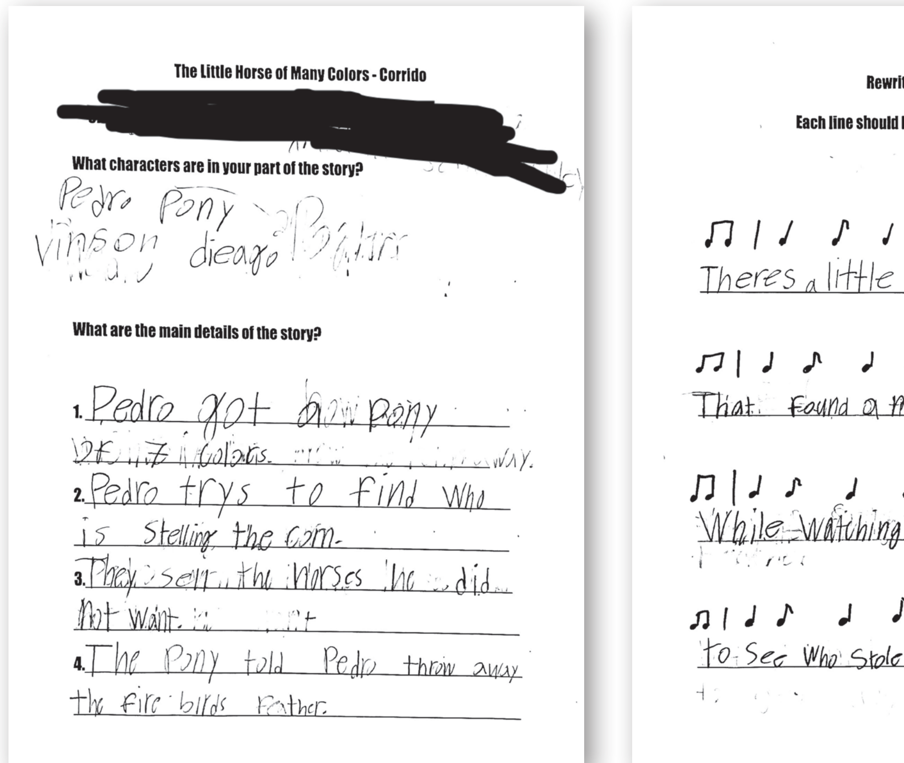
Discussion

Although the performance of the corrido was a success, the process to put it all together could have been better. I researched culture bearer sources and also allowed students who were fluent in Spanish to sing *Corrido de Cananea* in its original Spanish text or in English, which gave them the choice to become culture bearers in our classroom. Nevertheless, musicians or individuals of Mexican culture experienced with corridos would have had a much greater impact on them. Others have found success in doing this; for instance, Cantarelli Vita (2020) invited a culture bearer from Japan to assist in teaching her students the Japanese folk song, *Tsuki*. Through the culture bearer's presence in the classroom, students learned about the complicated history between the United States and Japan, traits of Japanese culture in the United States, and important Japanese cultural traditions.

Heinrich (2017) went through a non-profit organization to bring a folk music ensemble from China to perform for her students. She used Chinese folk music for various lessons in preparation for the ensemble and had students perform for them in return. Having learned much of Chinese culture in anticipation of the ensemble's arrival, the students were attentive and engaged as the musicians performed and discussed their culture.

Beyond the musical and cultural education students received through the unit, this kind of project is a good example of how other subject areas can be addressed in the curriculum. Drama, literacy, history, and geography were involved in the corrido unit. Students pantomimed the story told in the corrido (drama), practiced fluency in speaking, and demonstrated syllabic competencies by rewriting the text of the corrido to summarize

Figure 3. Students Summarized the Story and Rewrote the Corrido.



SOURCE: CHRIS ABELL/ESTES THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS. USED WITH PERMISSION.

the folk tale, keeping in time the syllabic rhythm (literacy). The historical significance of the corrido led to a rich discussion of the Mexican Revolution and the important figures and locations involved (history). This was important for students who might not have been aware of the history of their family's country of origin. Although the folktale used was a Latin American variation of "The Little Horse of Many Colors," the origins of the story have been traced back through several cultures throughout human history. Students were fascinated by how the story began in the Persian empire, made its way to Spain when the Persians invaded, and then to Latin America when the Spanish began to assert their culture in the area (geography). This project was similar to a study by McDowell (2019), who discussed in length the connection between a unit like this and *drama*. He stated how allowing students to create their own dramatic works parallels the Orff concept of child input in musical ideas. McDowell also discussed the benefits of pantomime to help students practice and explore their dramatic creativity. Estes third-grade students accomplished this by creating their own dramatic interpretations of the folktale for their performance (see Figure 3).

Conclusion

The diversity in classrooms in the United States presents a unique challenge for educators who seek to connect to a variety of cultures. Cultural celebrations like Hispanic Heritage Month offer an opportunity to include authentic examples of music from the Latin American cultures represented in schools. The corrido's pentatonic melodies, simple rhythms, and opportunity for creative input align with key elements of the Orff Schulwerk approach, making it a perfect song style for students to celebrate Mexican culture. It is musically accessible for them and, as a ballad, it is well suited for drama and musical performances. Finally, due to its historical significance, teachers can use the corrido to develop cross-curricular connections.

It is my hope that sharing this experience of incorporating the corrido into the classroom will encourage other music educators to include multicultural content in their instruction. Thoroughly researching is key to creating authentic experiences that stimulate cultural enrichment and connection, not only during cultural celebrations, but throughout the academic year. ■

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Improvisation

As the release of creativity from a happy heart and an awakened mind, improvisation is a key to resilience, joy, cooperation, and learning. In our next issue of *The Orff Echo*, we will explore how improvisation can be nurtured in our students and in ourselves as Orff Schulwerk teachers. Like a flower that bursts forth from a seed hidden in the ground, improvisation manifests our dearest possession, our Self. Join us in pondering, exploring, and celebrating it!

The Play Party and Its Seamless Connection to Orff Schulwerk

ABSTRACT

The play party is an American song and movement form popular from about 1850 to 1950, though recent publications have increased its availability. In this article, the author examines the connections between play parties and the Orff Schulwerk classroom.

CECILIA RIDDELL received a bachelor's degree in music at Pomona College, a master's degree in teaching from Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and a PhD in ethnomusicology and music education from UCLA. Cecilia's 30-year teaching career, throughout which she incorporated the Orff Schulwerk approach, spans both coasts with a focus on early childhood and teacher education. Her lifelong interest in Orff Schulwerk was significantly influenced by Jos Wuytack.

By Cecilia Riddell

Combining song and dance demonstrates an age-old historical layer of musical expression, perhaps an indication of tradition within all cultures. The play party is an authentic, indigenous American music that consists of movement with singing accompaniment. This song-dance form reflects the music making of Anglo-American immigrants during and beyond the westward expansion into areas occupied by Native Americans (approximately 1850–1950). European settlers and pioneer families brought their music, patterns of expression, and elements of song and dance to be reshaped into a uniquely Anglo-American musical repertoire at a time when they needed this kind of social entertainment to balance out their long days of hard work and often social isolation. The play party is an artform ethnomusicologists consider a remarkable contribution to our nation's musical history.

Familiar Experts Describe this Musical Form

Jean Ritchie (1953), writing in *A Garland of Mountain Songs*, described the proficiency needed for play parties: "[These] require skill of execution, a good memory, and a second sense of what comes next … players sing the beautiful melody, clap the hands to give more lift to the feet, go through the figure changes that make the game, all at the same time" (p. 40). Burl Ives (1962) wrote about the family nature of play parties in *The Wayfaring Stanger's Notebook*. He told us that the whole family participated—adults, teens, and younger children along with their parents. He related the interesting origin of the term *play party,* noting that

Table 1. Comparison for Clarity.

Singing Game	Play Party	Square Dance
Centuries old	About 100 active years	Centuries old, from quadrilles
Universal	American	Known in many countries
Played by young children	Played by families	Played by adults
Lyrics are sung	Lyrics are sung	Nobody sings
Taught by parents, teachers, and children to children	Taught by oral tradition	Taught by a trained "caller"
Still alive and popular	About 100 years of popularity	Still alive and popular
No funded organization	No funded organization	American Square Dance Association
Many published examples	Not so many publishers	Widely published examples
Plentiful recordings	Some authentic recordings	Many recordings, videos
Simple to learn	Mostly simple to learn	Challenging to learn
Recognized as for children	Easily recognized	Easily identified

SOURCE: CREATED BY CECILIA RIDDELL, 2023.

certain rural religious communities did not approve of dancing, nor did they allow the fiddle, which they referred to as the instrument of the devil.

Nomenclature

Some confusion exists between the terms *play party* and *singing game*. In many books and recordings, the play party is listed as, or implied to be, a singing game. Janet E. Tobitt provided one clue to the confusion over terminology. She was born and educated in the United Kingdom where the term *play party* is not generally recognized. When she published a series of American play parties, she called them *Singing Games for Recreation* (Tobitt, 1942–1952). Elsewhere, Tobitt called them *song-dances*. Table 1 displays my clarifications, with *square dance* added to the terms.

Flemish painter Pieter Brueghel, and later his son, portrayed scenes such as that depicted in Wedding Dance of 1566, which appeared to be about the joyful dancing of peasants. Some scholars believe the art was meant to show caricatures of socially disgraced dance, violations of the church's rules for behavior. Church leaders preached that unruly song and dance was a social evil, especially the forbidden swinging of arms and legs. Centuries later, in the United States, *play party* was agreed upon as an acceptable replacement for the term *dancing*. The combination of the words *play* and *party* suggested healthy recreation to the church leaders who might otherwise have objected. After all, there would be no fiddling because everyone sang the music.

Melodies and Lyrics

"Songs were catchy and provided an easy verse form to which new lines could be made up," stated Ives (1962, p. 243). One of those catchy songs—reputed to be a favorite of Lincoln's—was *Skip to my Lou*. Others included *Yankee Doodle, Pop Goes the Weasel, I've Been Working on the Railroad*, and Stephen Foster's *Oh! Susanna*. Still others included Anglo-American personalities, such as *Old Joe Clark, Old Dan Tucker, Sally Down the Alley*, and *Captain Jinks*.

Humor abounds in play party lyrics. The courting verses often have an amusing ending. In *Cedar Swamp*, a girl ends up as a wife who "makes me work all thru the week and get stove wood on Sunday." In *Jingle at the Window*, a man asks a lady to marry him but she says, "No, not on your life!" so he proposes to her mother. Teachers need not censor the lyrics; rather, an option would be to emphasize the humor and provide the context to students.

American Flavor of the Play Party

Although not popular in U.S. cities, the play party traveled with settlers and immigrants across what was the United States in the 1850s and onward. The American flavor shows in lyrics from songs such as *Goin' to Boston, Alabama Gal*, and *Great Big House in*

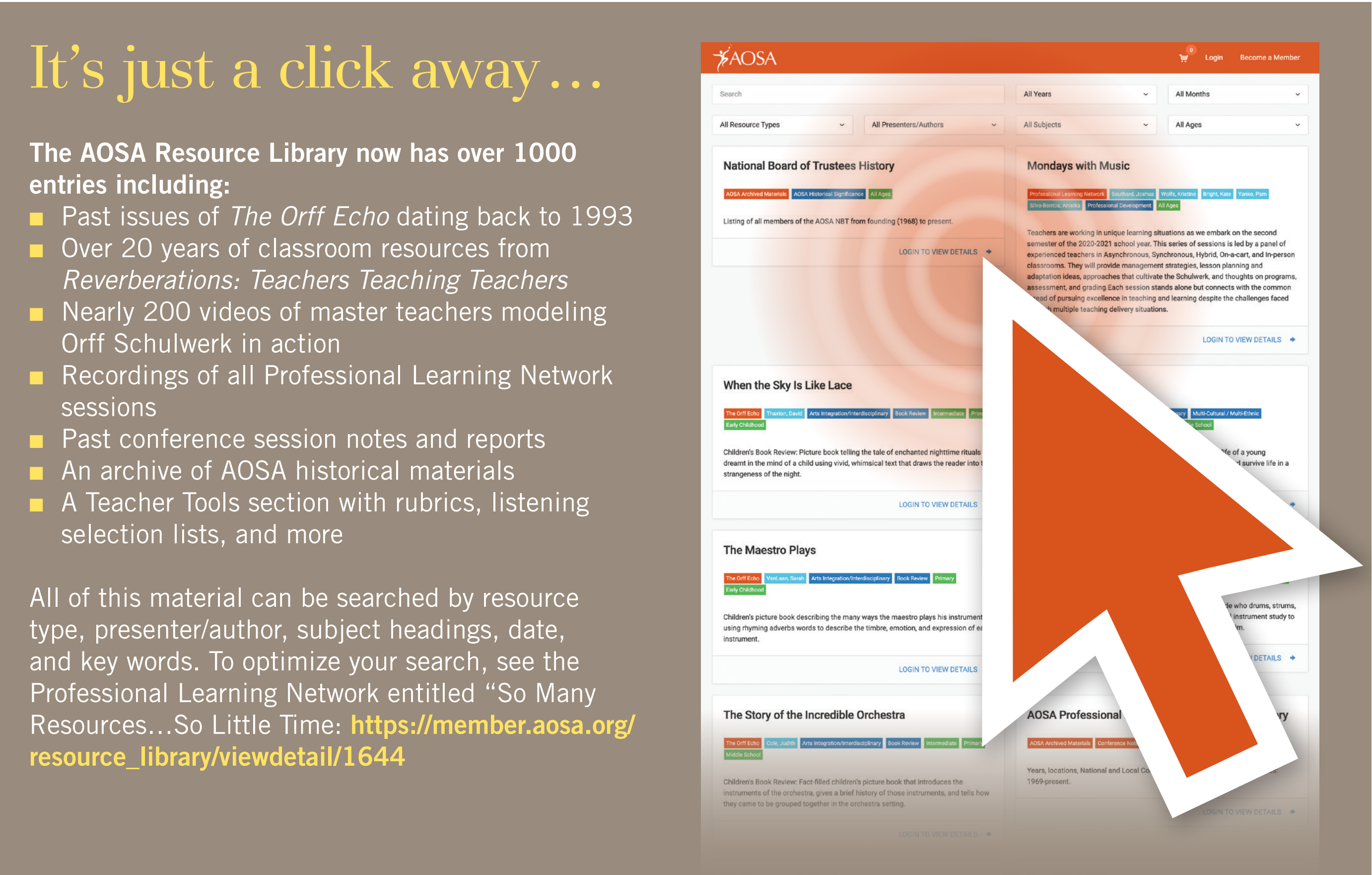
New Orleans. The American flavor was also apparent in the organization of play parties. When families attended these events—which might be held in a parlor, living room, or even a barn—there was often a need to accommodate babies and small children. In moderate weather, it would not be unusual to see dancers in someone's field or front or backyard, perhaps under moonlight. Prior to the advent of the automobile in the early 1900s, areas to rein horses or park buggies and wagons for those not within walking distance were also needed.

European Influence

Unlike country dances and quadrilles (a square dance for four couples), play parties were not formally taught. Lyrics, tunes, and instructions were not captured on paper. In Europe during the early 1900s, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály expressed and expanded their national identity with their enormous collections and studies of folk songs and dances from remote Hungarian villages (Bayley, 2001). Cecil Baring-Gould, Cecil Sharp, and Ralph Vaughan Williams were a few of the British scholars and promoters of folk song and dance in England; they shared their enthusiasm in America, where ethnomusicology was beginning to evolve (English Song and Folk Dance Society, n.d.). Around the turn of the last century, like folktales and folksongs, a standard repertoire was developed eventually and the play party was documented in print in the hope that new generations would replicate its delightful musical aspects.

The Play Party's Growing Popularity

In the United States, Katherine and Lynn Rohrbough created a successful business printing pocket-sized games and music books, some full of play parties. The couple graduated from Boston University's religious studies program, which gave them the idea to furnish booklets for recreational purposes. Their first company, Church Recreation Services (1930–1933), aptly reflected their background. Methodist congregations hosted the couple as they drove across the United States collecting songs they compiled into small, paper-covered books handy to carry for teaching.



Methodist and other church leaders welcomed this kind of music because of its potential to unify their members beyond singing hymns. Thus, customers for their published custom books included churches as well as summer camps, Girl Scouts, 4-H clubs, colleges, and schools. Their *Handy Play Party Book* (Rohrbough & Rohrbough, 1940) eventually became their longest-in-publication, which helps explain how these religious groups contributed to the play party's very existence.

Demise of the Play Party in America

Kenneth Munson spearheaded a play party revival in Hope, Texas. He prefaced the title of his book, *A Lost Art* (Munson, 1990), by remarking that this area might be the only place in America where the play party had been revived following a demise at the end of World War II.

In *Waltz the Hall,* Spurgeon (2005) also pointed out the play party's demise. He blamed the obvious—the decline in the number of rural settlements in the United States. Along with Munson, he suggested that eventually rural settlers would have been tempted to find competing entertainment in nearby cities, particularly when cars became more available. As it turned out, many of these urban choices failed to satisfy the human need to dance, clap hands, sing, and swing elbows with other like-minded folks.

Seamless Connections

It was the song *Captain Jinks* that captured my attention and kindled my interest in the play party. At the first meeting of my graduate school music education course, the professor led us onto a dance space and began to sing and show us how to join him. We sang, "I'm Captain Jinks of the horse marines. I feed my horse on corn and beans." After a playful year of discovering folk music, I was able to share folk songs and play parties with both young and adult students (see Figure 1).

In 1961, this professor had attended the first American Continental Conference of the Orff Schulwerk in Toronto. Upon his return to Harvard University, he was eager to share the Orff Schulwerk approach to teaching music. A set of Orff percussion instruments soon arrived from Germany. I remember our excitement as we opened the boxes and how, during these early years of Orff's influence on American music education, we began to see a link between the Schulwerk and the play party.

Figure 1. College Students Dancing Play Parties at Cal State, Dominguez Hills, 1990.

SOURCE: CECILIA RIDDELL. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Around the turn of the last century, like folktales and folksongs, a standard repertoire was developed eventually and the play party was documented in print in the hope that new generations would replicate its delightful musical aspects.

I have enjoyed sharing with my students the colorful details of play parties such as this one: "At play-parties nobody sang any louder, stomped the rough puncheon floor any harder, or swung the bright-eyed girls in linsey-woolsey any higher than big, lanky, awkward Abe Lincoln" (Lair, 1954, p. 22). It is interesting to surmise that Lincoln danced play parties in his rural Illinois community. Later, as president, he would have danced quadrilles.

Many teachers today, particularly Orff Schulwerk and Kodály practitioners, adhere to philosophies conducive to the American play party. Orff and Kodály specified that musical materials must focus on authentic musical sources. Both groups advocated movement with singing. As Orff Schulwerk expert Jos Wuytack quipped in a Level III course I attended in 1980, "Songs without motion are like sunbathing without lotion."

Spurgeon's (2005) *Waltz the Hall* contains the most extensive chronicles of the social and historical conditions of the play party. Along with his university students and colleagues, he interviewed and recorded folks who still knew play party games, often through older relatives in neighborhoods and small towns. After compiling over 80 complete play parties, he included an index that comprised numerous lists of bibliographical material. Just as Iona and Peter Opie (1985) wrote *the book* on singing games, Spurgeon wrote *the book* on play parties. In addition, two especially delightful books by Orff experts are Aaron's (1978) *Punchinella 47: Twenty Traditional American Play Parties* and Wuytack and Aaron's (1972) *Joy! Play Sing Dance: American Play Parties for Voices, Recorders, and Orff Instruments.*

Members of both the Organization of American Kodály Educators and the American Orff-Schulwerk Association have presented and published articles about play parties. Spurgeon, for instance, has published articles in both *The Orff Echo* and the *Kodály Envoy*. Martha Riley (2004), writing in *The Orff Echo,* appreciated the play party as a pre-curser to folk dancing:

> Accompanied only with singing, play parties use simple footwork with the emphasis on social and "game" aspects. Children experience movements and concepts found in traditional folk dances ... you may think play parties are more difficult than dancing to recorded music because the children must do two things at once: sing and move. But the words of the song often include dance instructions, so that singing makes the game easier to play. Furthermore, when children are singing, the beat is internal.... Children are more aware of the beat, phrase, and form when making music themselves. (p. 50)

In addition to Riley, Orff Schulwerk practitioners Jill Trinka, Sanna Longden, Jos Wuytack, Randy DeLelles, and Jeff Kriske have published and taught these authentic dances across the country. They were known for promoting play parties at national and local conferences and workshops.

Music educators, notably Orff Schulwerk practitioners, are distinctly positioned to refresh this genre. Accompaniments of pitched and unpitched percussion are natural additions to Orff and Keetman's

Table 2. Additional Resources – Chronological Order

Resource
Botkin, B. A. (1937). *The American Play-Party Song.* University of Nebraska Press.
Tobitt, J. E. (1947). *Promenade all; A compilation of song-dances.* Tobitt.
Price, M. K. (1953). *The source book of play party games.* Burgess Publishing Co.
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Spurgeon, A. L. (1999). The play party in the Ozarks. *Kodály Envoy*, Fall, 1999, *26*(1). Organization of American Kodály Educators.
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Miner, L. (2017). *Mormon pioneer dances of the early saints.* Cedar Fort, Inc.
The Orff Echo. (Various). Articles by academic and Orff Schulwerk practitioners Aaron, Chrisman/Riley, Riddell, Spurgeon, Stafford, and Wolford.

pedagogical approach. Incorporating the Orff Schulwerk approach into the music classroom provides further enhancement. For example, Orff Schulwerk practitioners encourage students to improvise speech, movement, and gesture. They facilitate simultaneous movement with song and know how to improvise imaginative introductions and postludes. Another practice is extending songs by spinning additional verses from their and their students' imaginations. Burkart (1974), a founder and first president of AOSA, outlined these extensions in *Keeping up with Orff Schulwerk in the Classroom*.

Conclusion

In recent years play party descriptions have noticeably increased online. Does this indicate its popularity is resurging? As Orff Schulwerk practitioners, we have the means to contribute to the preservation of this tradition. In *Waltz the Hall*, Spurgeon (2005) reminded us that those who danced and sang in the tradition of the play party have passed on, but we teachers are still alive. This authentic American genre is waiting for us to share with students, to keep the legacy alive, and to ensure it remains in the repertoire for future generations to enjoy. ■

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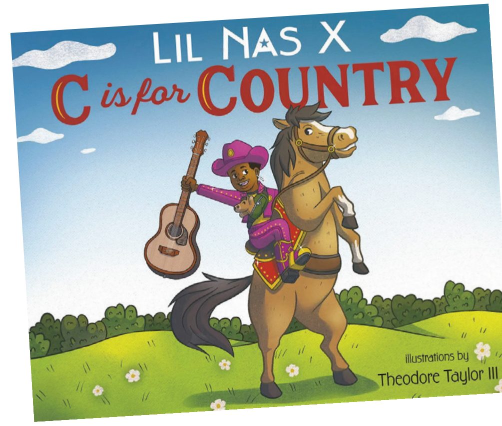
Reviewed by **Martina Vasil**

C is for Country

Written by Lil Nas X /Illustrated by Theodore Taylor III
Random House, 2021



Ever since Lil Nas X released his hit song in 2019, *Old Town Road,* I had been hearing it everywhere—in the grocery store, in the car, in my hometown sung to me by my nephews, and at work, where my preschool students sang it to me and told me it was their favorite song. Since then, not only has Lil Nas X emerged as a multi-award-winning artist, but he also released a children's book.

Listening to our students and picking up on the songs and melodies they know is a powerful way to make authentic connections with them.

I instantly snatched up a copy of *C is for Country* and began coming up with a multitude of lesson plan ideas. The book is simple. It goes through the alphabet, naming things you would expect to associate with a farm: "A is for adventure … B is for boots … C is for country." On occasion, you get some unexpected associations. For example, "F is for fringe, and feathers, and fake fur …" In the end, readers follow Lil Nas X around his farm to meet the animals in his life and his family. Some of my favorite lines in the book are, "Music is for everyone" and "We've got love for everybody, no matter who you are, where you're from, what you look like."

Author Gabi Snyder and illustrator Stephanie Graegin work preschool and kindergarten students to review the alphabet and develop body awareness. As I read the book to an instrumental track of *Old Town Road,* I paused in the story to ask students to make the shapes of the alphabet with their bodies. We did half the alphabet one day, and the other half another day.

In a different lesson, I played the instrumental track of *Old Town Road,* transposed up six half steps using the Chrome extension Transposer. This put it in an appropriate range for my young students, enabling them to sing the chorus every four or five pages: "Gonna take my horse to the old town road, I'm gonna ride 'till I can't no more." Once they were comfortable with that, I used a deck of animal flash cards to inspire creative movement. "What animal did he take to the old town road?" I asked. "His horse!" students acknowledged. "What if he took a … penguin? How do penguins travel?" Students showed me waddling, and so I sang, "Gonna take my penguin to the old town road, I'm gonna waddle 'till I can't no more." This continued with four to five more animals. In the next lesson, we reviewed the animals from the last class and students took turns singing the chorus by themselves.

Further possibilities abound. You can explore connections to social-emotional learning, as the book promotes acceptance and love for one another. The book can also be a great way to connect to rural life, and children can learn about farm communities and the people and animals who work there. Drawing music connections, you can explore the sound of the song, which is both hip hop and country. What are other hip hop and country songs children might know?

In the end, this book offers a great connection to music and artists in our current society. Listening to our students and picking up on the songs and melodies they know is a powerful way to make authentic connections with them. The last sentence on the back of the book invites us all to "Join Lil Nas X in his celebration of music and power inside all of us." You won't look back. ■

MARTINA VASIL is an associate professor of music education at the University of Kentucky and a preK through Grade 6 music teacher at Lexington Montessori School. She completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and served on *The Orff Echo* editorial board. Martina loves incorporating popular media and current artists into her lesson plans and co-teaches a one-week special topics course on Popular Music and Orff Schulwerk at the University of Kentucky with David Dockan.

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by **Melissa J. Ryan**

Listen

Written by Gabi Snyder/Illustrated by Stephanie Graegin
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2021

In *Listen*, readers follow a young girl and are invited to "listen to everything waiting to be heard" in each new context and circumstance as the girl makes her way through a typical day. At the start, the girl steps outside her urban home wearing her red backpack, ready to walk to school and begin her day. Immediately, she is bombarded by noise. Then the fun begins. With each passing page, we are encouraged to "listen past the noise," to pay attention and make sense of the cacophony through the eyes and ears of our nameless protagonist.

Author Gabi Snyder and illustrator Stephanie Graegin work seamlessly together to create a symphony of sights and sounds: the "crunch" of gravel and "scrape" of sidewalk chalk, the "brush-rush-hush" of the wind in the trees, and even the "sob," "sigh," or "silence" of a friend at school. The story takes us outside to experience nature and inside to interact with friends, family, and pets. We go to noisy places and very quiet places. In all places, the author asks us to not just hear, but to close our eyes and listen—even to listen to our friends and, poignantly, to our own voice.

This lovely take on the act and art of listening leads naturally into activities like creating soundscapes and producing music from "found sounds" based on our students' environments and lived experiences. A great place to start is to ask

This lovely take on the act and art of listening leads naturally into activities like creating soundscapes and producing music from "found sounds" based on our students' environments and lived experiences.

students questions such as, “What do you hear when you are on your way to school? In your classroom? In your bed at night?” Using the illustrations as inspiration, encourage your students to create their own storyboard or artwork to mimic their unique, personal soundscapes. My students were captivated by this exercise in imagination and exploration, which has resulted in creative collaboration with other arts and classroom teachers as well.

I am also inspired to use this text as a complement or precursor to any listening activity, especially for older students. When used along with the supplemental material on the final page, the text invites discussion: “How can we be more engaged, creative, and critical when listening to music?” Even adult readers will be motivated by the challenges the book presents to listen more creatively to music.

Beyond these connections, I am most struck by the possibilities of connecting the author’s ideas about listening to music and sounds to the practices of mindfulness, empathy, and self-awareness. This means listening not only to the concrete sounds we hear day-to-day and in the music classroom, but listening to our feelings, to our friends, to ourselves, and to the world around us. These are skills and dispositions that go beyond the walls of our music classrooms and get right to the heart of living a flourishing life. If my students reflect on only one insight from this story, I hope it is, “Can you hear the voice inside you?” ■

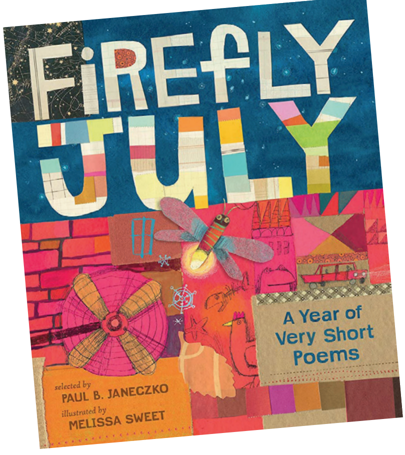
MELISSA J. RYAN has taught music for 15 years. She currently serves as a music education professor at University of New Hampshire where she continues to share her passion for the elementary music classroom with preservice music teachers. She has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III. Melissa holds a PhD in music education from the University of Miami and is an avid reader of books for people of all ages.

CHILDREN’S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by **Erin Elliott**

Firefly July: A Year of Very Short Poems

Poems selected by Paul Janeczko
Illustrated by Melissa Sweet
Candlewick Press, 2014



Poetry and music have been linked since the ancient Greeks used both art forms interchangeably. Each is independent of the other, yet the connection between the two is notable everywhere. In the Orff Schulwerk classroom, poetry can be a launchpad for creativity; it lends itself easily to exploring the natural flow of rhythmic text, expressing emotions, and working towards cross-curricular understanding in the school setting.

Although there is no shortage of children’s poetry anthologies, the collection in *Firefly July: A Year of Very Short Poems* features an accessible and imaginative exploration of poetry—compiled by

Paul B. Janeczko and illustrated by Melissa Sweet—that captivates elementary students. Organized by season, these poems correspond to weather events and also delve into aspects of what children might see and do during those months. For adult readers, they pull at the heart strings and stir our own memories.

Many of the works Janeczko selected come from well-known poets such as Carl Sandburg, Langston Hughes, and Robert Frost. The poems are all very short (between 11 and 34 words), but their brevity does not indicate a lack of richness. Each one creates a vivid story or image to which students can connect, such as describing fireflies as "baby stars that leapt among the trees" or moonlight as "a silver spoon hanging below the clouds."

Poetry is abstract and can sometimes be challenging for our more "concrete-thinking" students. In addition, many anthologies lack vibrant illustrations. In this book, each poem (or two) is accompanied by one of Sweet's colorful illustrations to aid students' explorations and stimulate their imaginations.

Firefly July can launch cross-curricular collaboration with grade-level teachers in a poetry study unit. An option is to have students review different forms of poetry in their classroom, and then write their own to bring to music class to use as the basis for soundscapes. Older students working in collaborative groups in my music classroom turned selected poems into performance pieces with pitched and non-pitched percussion to highlight certain words and emotions. Simple props, such as scarves, LED finger lights, and bucket drums, encouraged creative movement to bring the poems to life. During this activity, they learned how to work cooperatively with their peers and chose roles based on their different strengths. Their classroom performances led to discussions regarding proper audience etiquette, how to overcome stage fright, and how best to support each other. In addition, these performances set the stage for a variety of future musical performances featuring small groups of students. *Firefly July* can serve as the starting point for a musical performance based on the seasons as well, with songs corresponding to selected poems.

Older students working in collaborative groups in my music classroom turned selected poems into performance pieces with pitched and non-pitched percussion to highlight certain words and emotions.

Bringing poetry into the music classroom has many benefits for both teachers and students. If you have not yet had the opportunity to do so, or are looking for a fresh resource, the collection presented in *Firefly July* is an inviting gateway for students into the realm of poetry. ■

ERIN ELLIOTT has taught since 2008 and is currently a kindergarten through Grade 5 elementary music teacher in Mishawaka, Indiana, and an adjunct professor at Indiana University South Bend. She received a bachelor's degree in music education from The College of Wooster and a master's degree in music education from the University of Louisville. Erin has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III.

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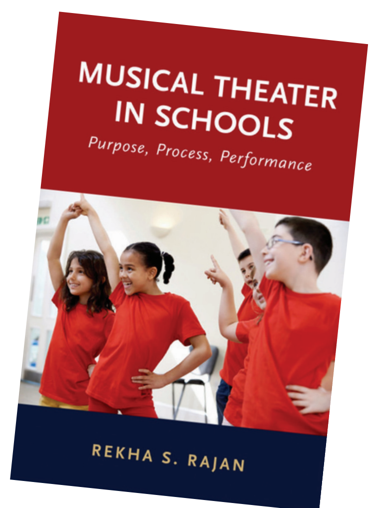
Reviewed by **Jeaneau Julian**



Musical Theater in Schools: Purpose, Process, Performance

Written by Rekha S. Rajan
Oxford University Press, 2019

My first experience with musical theater was as a senior in high school. I had the opportunity to see *The Phantom of the Opera* right after a band competition. The music was amazing, the set design was stunning, and even though my seat was at the very back of the auditorium, I was mesmerized. Later in my teaching career, this experience led me to ask, "How can educators share this type of experience with even our youngest students?" In *Musical Theater in Schools: Purpose, Process, Performance,* author Rekha S. Rajan shows us in four sections (three large "acts" and one shorter "encore") how to bring musicals to life in our classrooms.

In Act One, Rajan shares her perspective on the purpose of musical theater. Is it something as simple as "a show on Broadway" or something more? She states, "Musicals at their very core, are the intersection between music, theater, dance, visual arts, and the multimedia arts." According to Rajan, this is collaboration at its finest. She emphasizes, however, that rarely is this collaboration seen at the elementary and middle school levels. Students may sing songs from Broadway musicals in middle school or attend a show at the elementary level, but how are school curricula "drawing on the natural intersections between the arts (music, theater, dance, visual) and academics (gleaned from overarching themes of social justice, race, culture, and conflict)?"

Following a brief history of how musicals have evolved over time, Rajan discusses how they are deeply rooted in American history and culture. She points out that, ironically, musicals are not included in core curricula of many school systems but are relegated to extracurricular or community settings. On a personal note, this brings to mind my friend's daughter, who is actively involved in her local community theater. She enjoys it because of all the people she meets, making new friends and in her words, "the director is usually nice." How many of our students would flourish in our classes if given the same opportunities within core curricula in school settings? If students have these opportunities, what should the repertoire be? Rajan offers suggestions for appropriate repertoire as well as how to connect the musicals to related subject matter and themed learning experiences for various ages.

Students may sing songs from Broadway musicals in middle school or attend a show at the elementary level, but how are school curricula "drawing on the natural intersections between the arts (music, theater, dance, visual) and academics (gleaned from overarching themes of social justice, race, culture, and conflict)?"

In Act Two, Rajan deconstructs musical theater down to its roots to help students make classroom and life connections. Using the 2014 National Core Arts Standards of Creating, Responding, and Connecting, Rajan provides lessons using the standards as examples of how to bring musicals into the classroom. Four lessons are provided for each standard for the following levels of instruction: early elementary (K–2), upper elementary (3–5),

middle school (6–8), and secondary school (9–12). Each lesson provides objectives, a materials list, corresponding standards, step-by-step procedures, extensions, and opportunities for and examples of assessment. Some of the lesson topics include: A *Beauty and the Beast* comparison (early elementary), STOMPing Around (upper elementary), A New Setting for *The Sound of Music* (middle), and What is *The Color Purple?* (secondary). This section of the book could immediately transfer to a wonderful lesson in the music classroom, a unit on musicals, or a collaboration with grade-level teachers. Using musicals is another great way to help our students connect to the world around them. Most of these lessons lend themselves to creative movement, rewriting lyrics, and connections to other subjects (history, language arts, and social studies). The lessons would be perfect for distance learning as well.

Act Three delves into the performance aspects of musical theater, providing multiple examples with unique contexts and settings related to auditions, casting, rehearsals, and performance. Included is a discussion of three different types of auditions (required, talent, and volunteer), with examples of students navigating the audition process of each through singing, dancing, and acting. Casting purpose and process is also discussed relative to the three types of auditions, as well as the role of the tech department. Act Three concludes with the rehearsal and performance process. Considering the multiple settings of rehearsals, Rajan suggests inclusion of the following processes: table read, acting rehearsal, characterization, musical rehearsal, dance rehearsal, tech week, and dress rehearsal. Each process is discussed in detail, giving examples for each part of the rehearsal as well as audience etiquette.

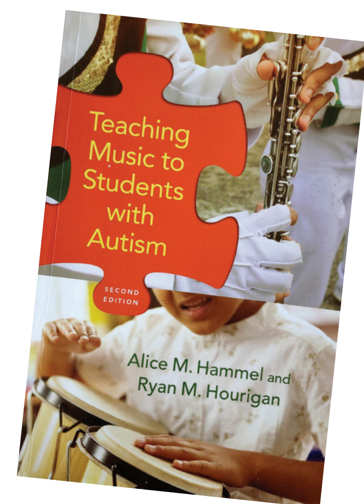
In the final Encore section of the book, Rajan challenges the reader with the realities of the life of a performer—the performer must show up or an understudy will be waiting to step in. Rajan also provides ideas for encouraging live performances, analyzing musical theater within the context of in-school learning, and attending and building professional development opportunities across disciplines. Inclusivity in casting shows is briefly addressed as well.

During my second year as a teacher, I had the opportunity to play clarinet in the pit orchestra of my school's production of *Les Misérables*. It was the first time I had ever been part of such a huge production. Music students held some of the main roles, and I was happy that my students experienced being a part of something bigger than themselves while still in secondary school.

In our ever-changing world, we must reflect on our political, social, and cultural climate. The lessons in this book have wonderful correlations to connect our students to this unique collaborative genre; I highly recommend it for all levels of teachers. Using musicals to express our daily lives can help our students become more empathetic to the experiences that exist in their communities around the world. ■

JEANEAU JULIAN is an elementary music educator in Little Rock, Arkansas. She completed her undergraduate degree in instrumental music education from the University of Oklahoma and earned a master's degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages from Arkansas Tech University. She has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and currently serves as Region III representative on the AOSA National Board of Trustees.

Reviewed by **Jennifer Wassemiller**



Teaching Music to Students with Autism

Written by Alice M. Hammel and Ryan M. Hourigan
Oxford University Press, 2020

Students on the autism spectrum—some identified, some not—are present in every music classroom across the United States. This second edition of *Teaching Music to Students with Autism* by Alice M. Hammel and Ryan M. Hourigan has been updated to reflect the criteria detailed in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and is a resource that every music educator needs to read. It provides information about how to help students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD); many of the strategies in the book will help other students in the classroom as well. Regardless of the type of music situation, the age level, or where you are on your journey of working with students with ASD, this book contains information you can adapt to your situation.

Hammel and Hourigan have created an extensive and practical resource for music educators that presents theory, policy, and research in a sensible and realistic manner. Additionally, they drew vignettes and examples from multiple ages and musical ensembles, not just elementary general music classrooms. Each chapter begins with an overview of topics listed within the first paragraph and concludes with three to five discussion questions along with suggested activities that are helpful during PD/PLC discussions when used as a textbook.

The authors commence by providing an explanation of the ASD diagnosis and the need for a team approach when working with these students. They explain typical intervention and treatment models and describe what those models would look like in a music classroom. They also cover strategies for collecting data on students with ASD, options for least restrictive environment (LRE), and questions to ask during IEP/504 meetings.

The next several chapters provide insight into communication, cognition, and classroom behavior, and socialization of students with ASD. Every chapter relates to musical experiences, although Chapters 6 through 8 address specific questions regarding how to assist students with ASD to be successful in the music classroom. Snapshots from music educators depicting their "real life" classroom situations fill Chapter 9. Chapter 10 focuses on preservice teacher education. In addition to the normal reference section, Chapter 11 lists and describes myriad resources for music teachers. These include internet resources for organizations and communities as well as apps for communication, scheduling, and teaching/making music. Readers can further their own research by perusing the section on print resources, divided conveniently into articles by practitioners and those from books, dissertations, and research journals.

Hammel and Hourigan have created an extensive and practical resource for music educators that presents theory, policy, and research in a sensible and realistic manner.

In *Teaching Music to Students with Autism,* the authors do an excellent job moving from the broad definition of ASD in the beginning chapters to revealing in subsequent chapters how ASD relates directly to instruction and student learning in the

music classroom (i.e., how ASD might manifest in students, what their responses are to typical music classroom activities, and strategies that might work with them). Each chapter is also designed in a way that encourages readers to explore not just sequentially, but also independently, based on their topic of interest.

I found this book to be a good reminder that with some preplanning and slight modifications, many of the activities educators already use in music instruction—such as "I Love My Little Rooster" and the singing conversations—aid in reciprocated communication and help develop expressive and receptive language. It is important to keep in mind, however, that some students with ASD struggle not only with vocal imitation, but also with physical imitation. Thus, educators must take care to divide class activities into smaller, manageable tasks that facilitate the motor planning that enables imitating fine motor movements. Additionally, providing concrete examples will lead students with ASD to greater understanding of their and their peers' emotions and facial expressions. This process benefits every student in the class, including multilingual students.

Teaching Music to Students with Autism inspired me to post the following self-reflection questions from the book beside my computer as a prompt during planning and teaching:

- How many words am I using?
- How fast is my pace?
- Am I making eye contact with my students?
- Does Johnny understand that I am happy with his progress?
- Does Adam understand when I am looking at him to be quiet?
- Am I breaking down my instructions into a logical sequence?

It is easy to become deficit-focused while considering our students' abilities. This book reminds us to train our lens on their strengths, which ultimately leads to an improved outlook and classroom culture and to greater learning opportunities for all our students. ■

JENNIFER WASSEMILLER teaches Kindergarten through Grade 5 general music in the Wichita, Kansas public schools and serves as an adjunct professor of music education at Friends University. She has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and is in the final stage of completing her PhD in music education at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Jennifer received a bachelor's degree in music education from Friends University, a master's degree from Emporia State University, and Kodály certification from Wichita State University.

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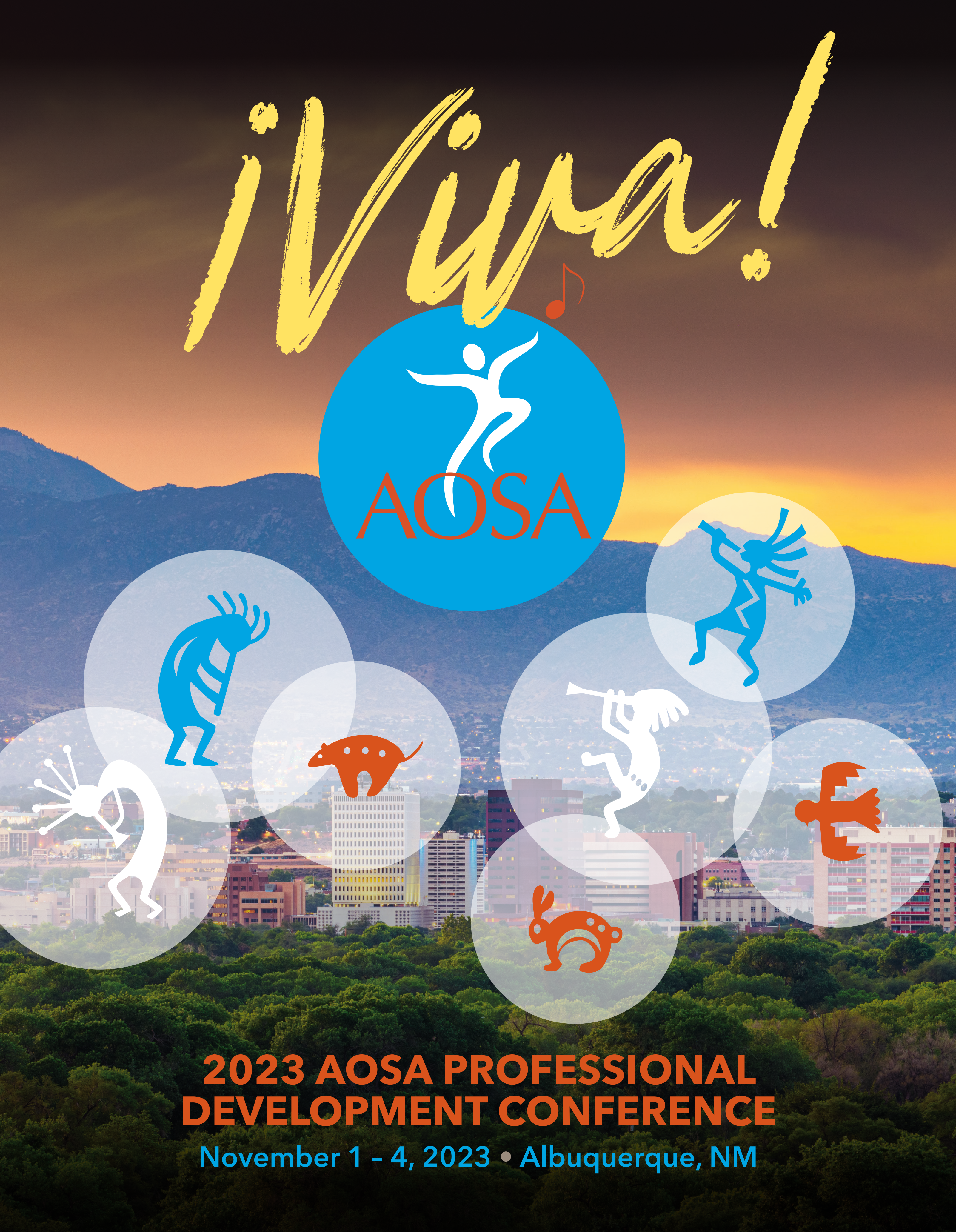
"We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."

Walt Disney

PHOTO: "GÄGGERSTEG" BY LUCAS BIERI.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